JUST LIKE
THE OTHER CHANGES
I'VE NOTICED...

I THINK
THIS SWORD HAS
BEEN REPLACED.

...ALL BOSS SWORDS LOOK THE SAME.
HOW CAN YOU TELL?

STORY/ART: TOONIMATED

CHAPTER 112

"INTO THE FRYING PAN PT. 2"

ALL
BOSS SWORDS
EXCEPT MINE.

THE SWORD I WAS CARRYING HAD A PIECE MISSING.
OTHERWISE I MAY NOT HAVE NOTICED IT CHANGE.

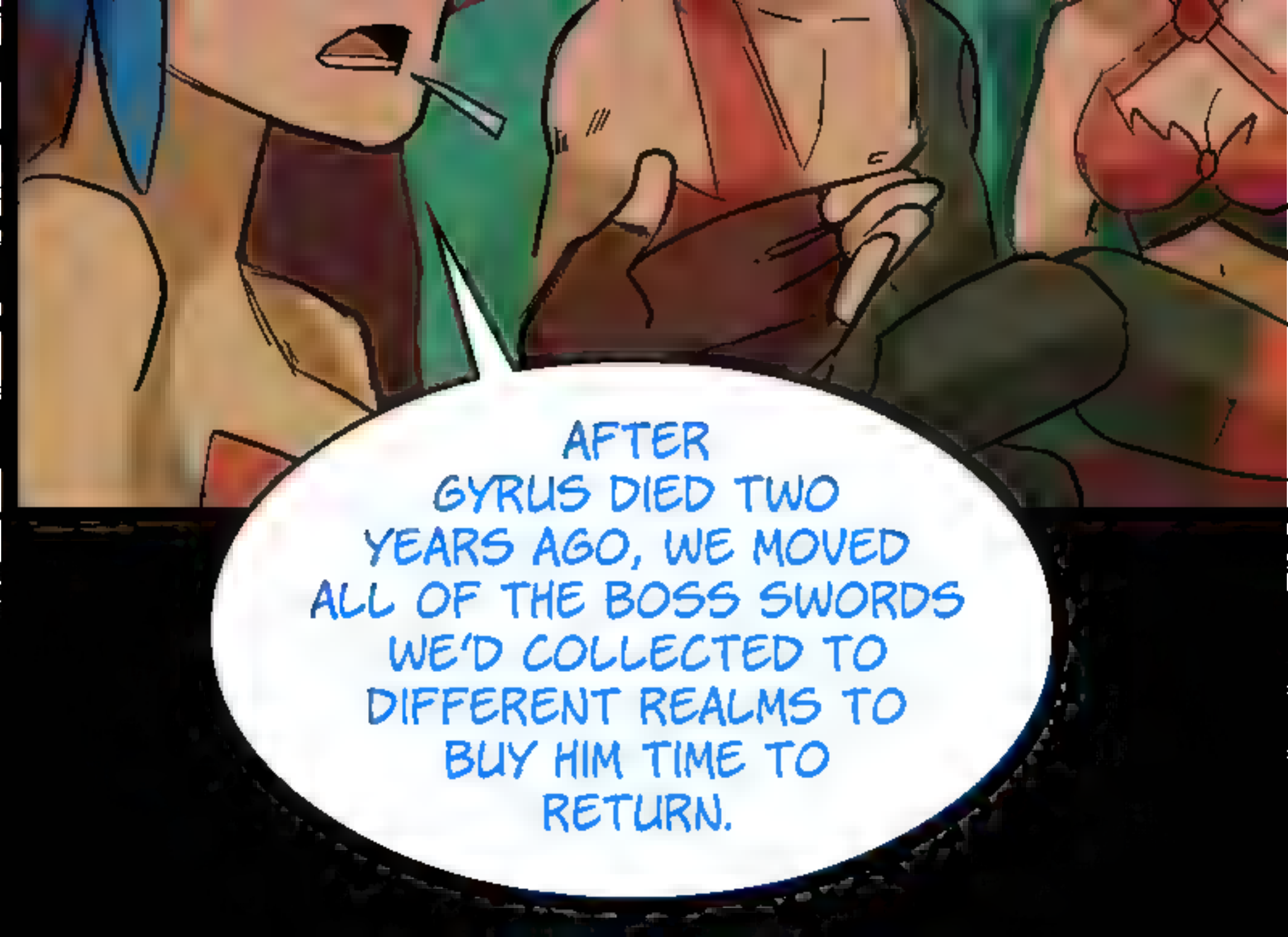
YOU THINK THIS IS DON'S DOING?

BUT WHY WOULD HE BE SWAPPING BOSS SWORDS?

COULD HE BE TESTING THE LIMITS OF HIS POWER?

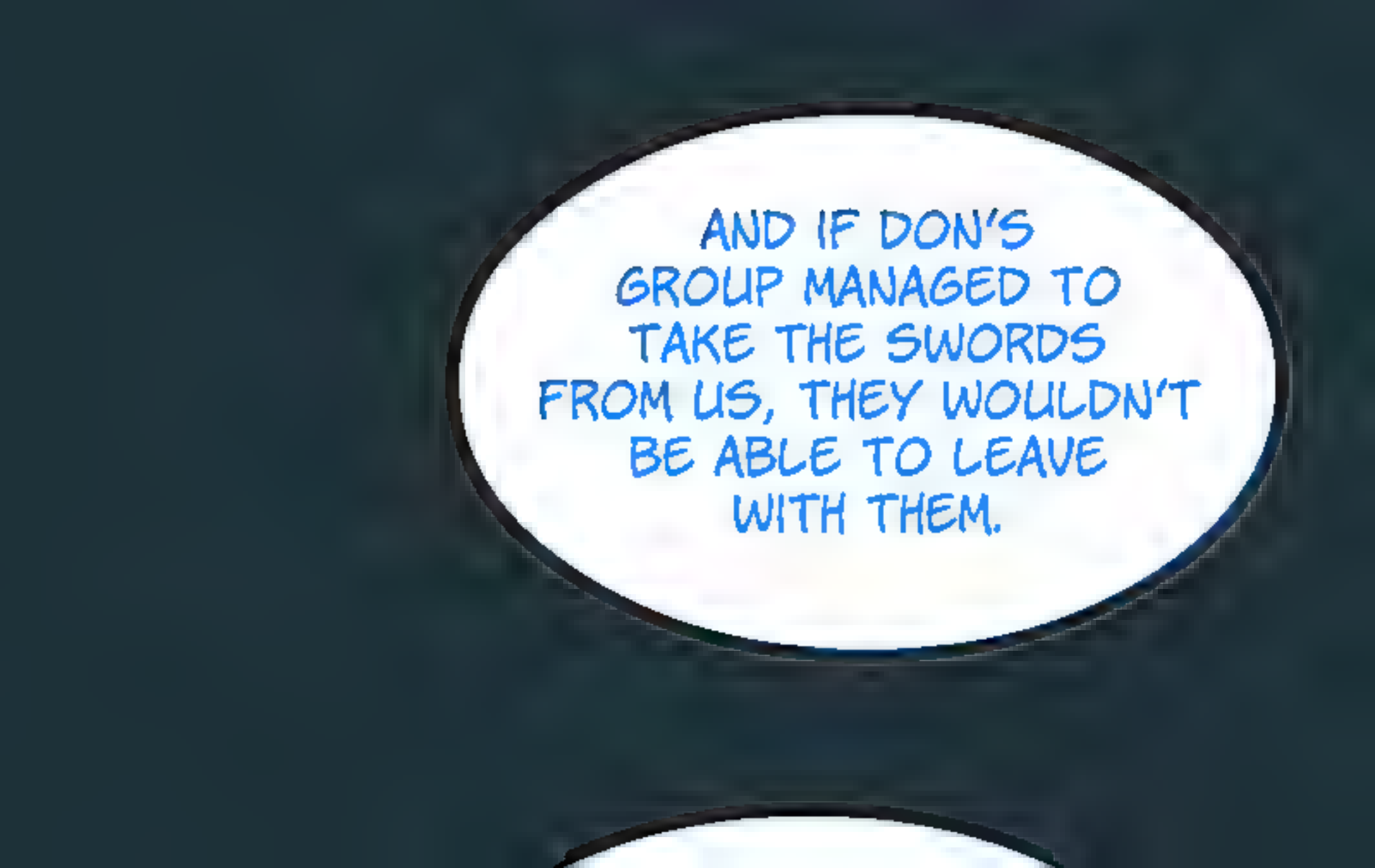
MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO UNSCRAMBLE THEM!

IT'S
LIKE WE WERE
TALKING ABOUT BACK
AT ALASTAIR'S
SHOP...

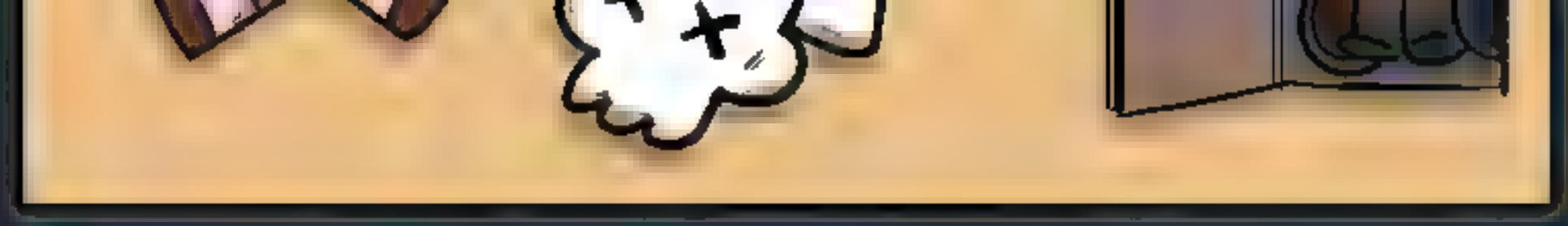

AFTER GYRUS DIED TWO YEARS AGO, WE MOVED ALL OF THE BOSS SWORDS WE'D COLLECTED TO DIFFERENT REALMS TO BUY HIM TIME TO RETURN.

THAT WAY, WE COULD ALL USE THE SWORDS WITHOUT OPENING THE GATE TO THE ROOM OF SWORDS.

LOST CITY
BEACH

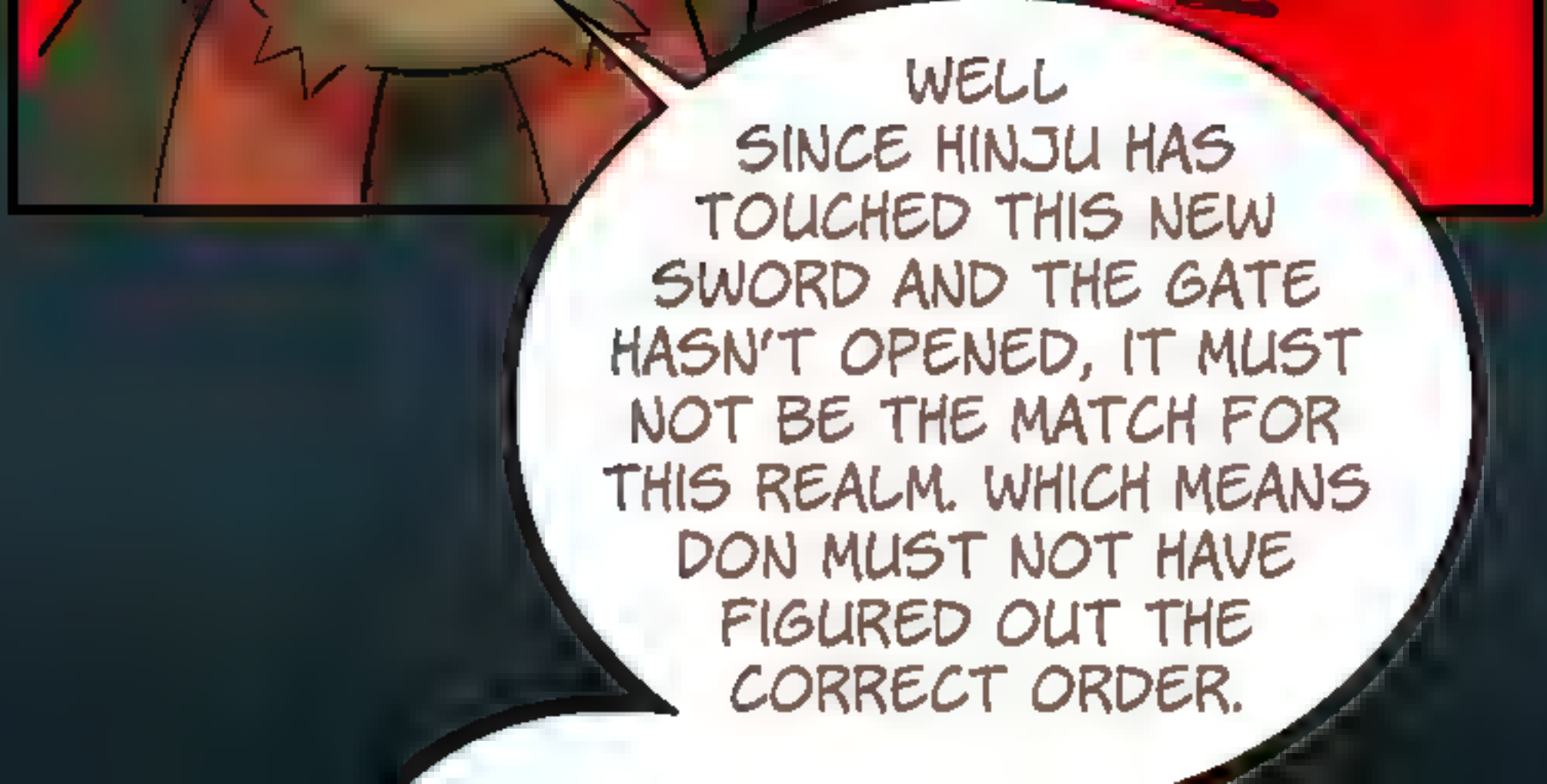

AND IF DON'S GROUP MANAGED TO TAKE THE SWORDS FROM US, THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LEAVE WITH THEM.

BUT SOMEONE WOULD HAVE TO HAD TOUCH THE SWORDS AT SOME POINT IN ORDER TO MOVE IT OUT OF THE REALM AND THE GATE WOULD HAVE OPENED.
OPEN!
ROOM OF SWORDS

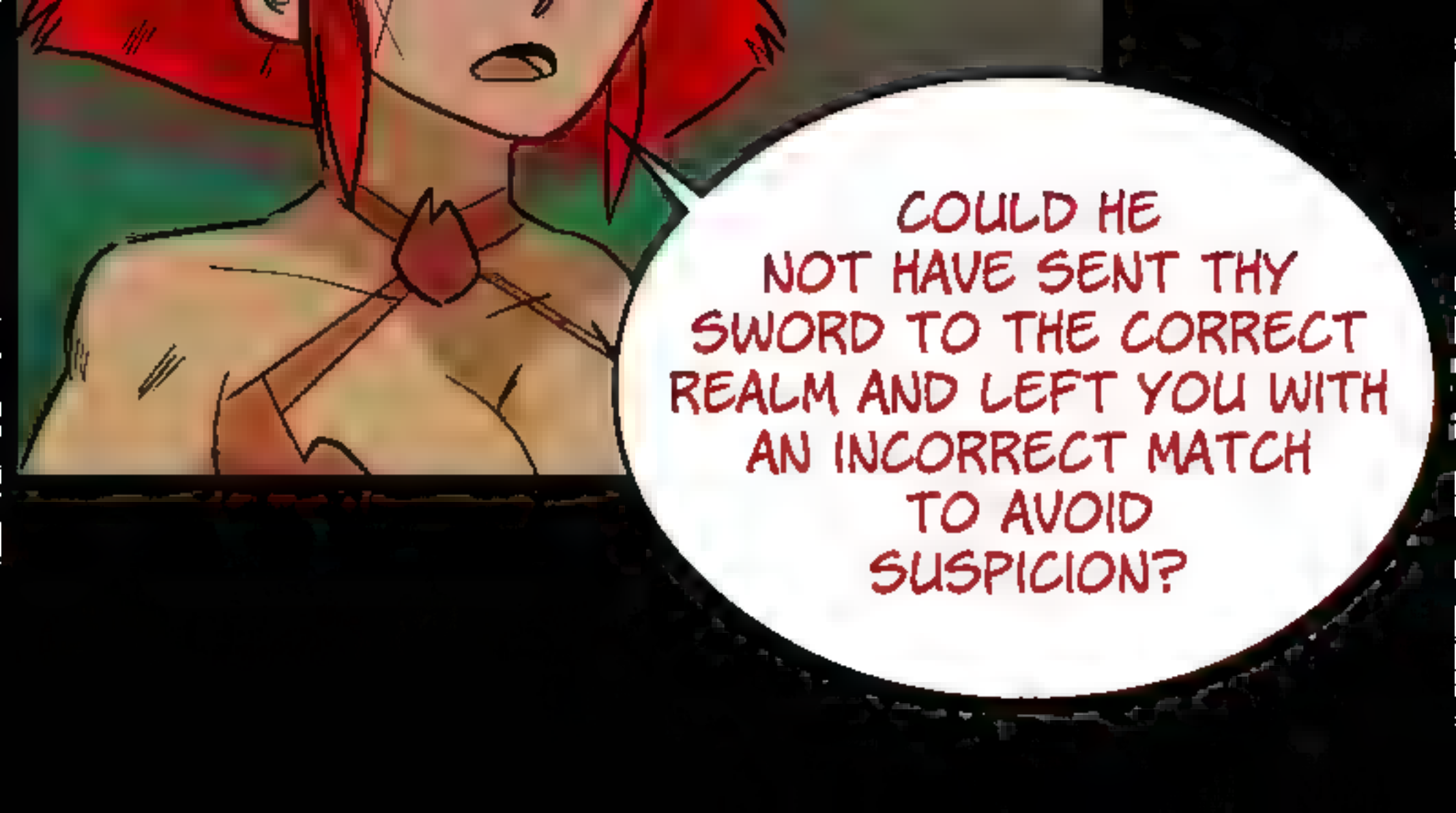


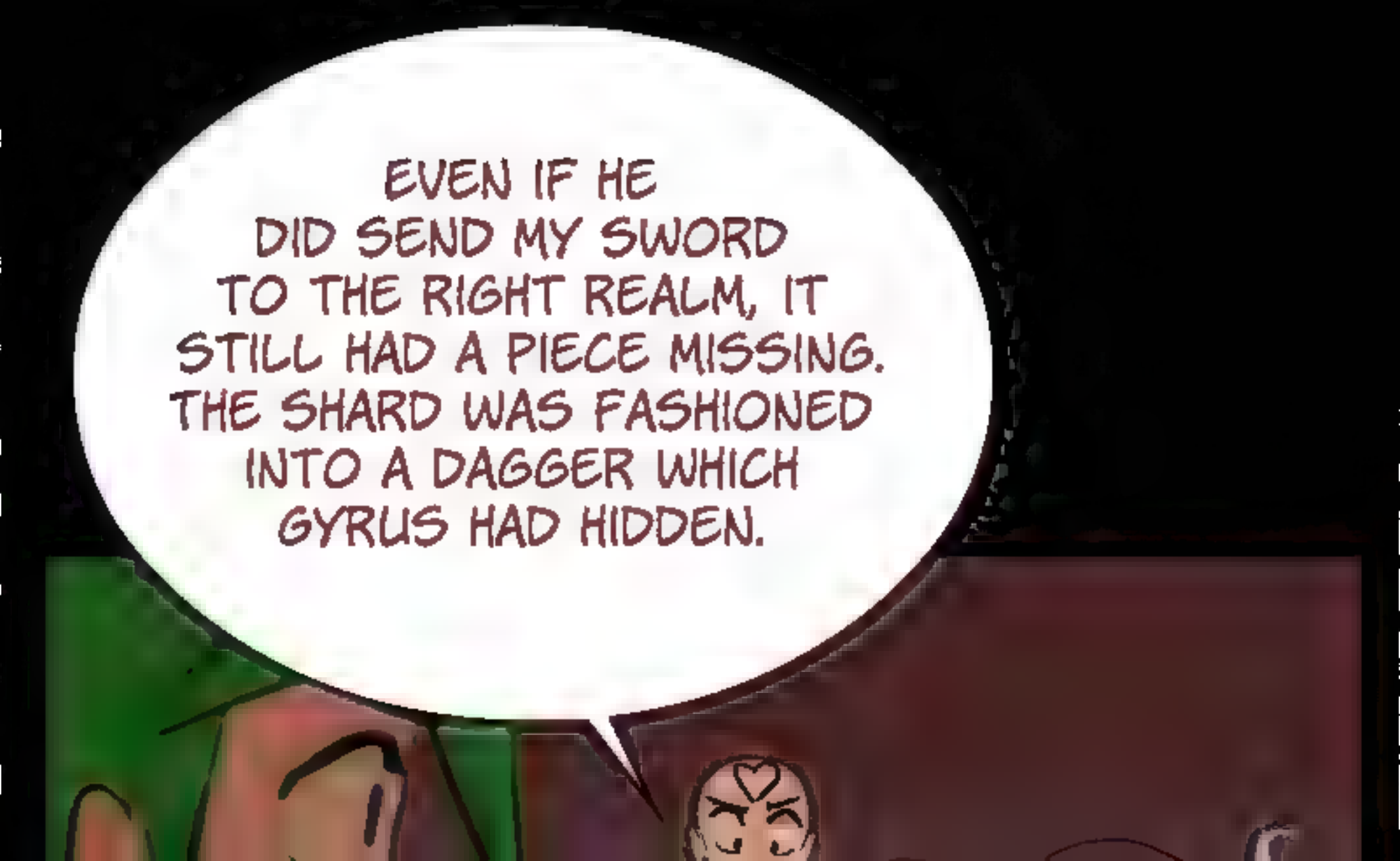
THAT'S WHERE KNOX COMES IN. SINCE HE'S NOT FROM OUR WORLD, HE DOESN'T COUNT AS A HUMAN BEING, SO AS LONG AS ONLY HE TOUCHES THE SWORD, THE GATE WON'T OPEN.

SLAM!


WELL
SINCE HINJU HAS TOUCHED THIS NEW SWORD AND THE GATE HASN'T OPENED, IT MUST NOT BE THE MATCH FOR THIS REALM. WHICH MEANS DON MUST NOT HAVE FIGURED OUT THE CORRECT ORDER.

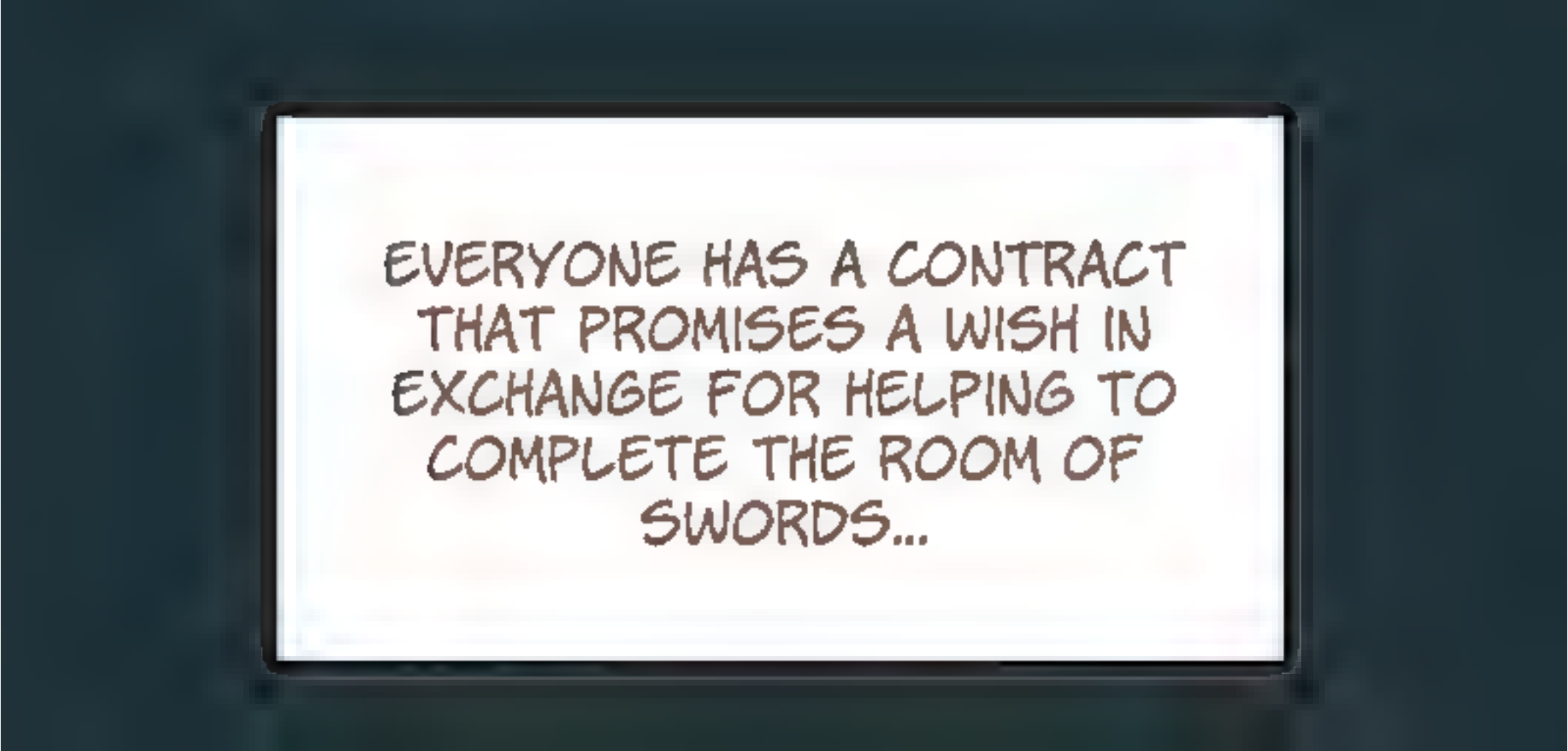
OR
HE'S UP TO
SOMETHING
ELSE...

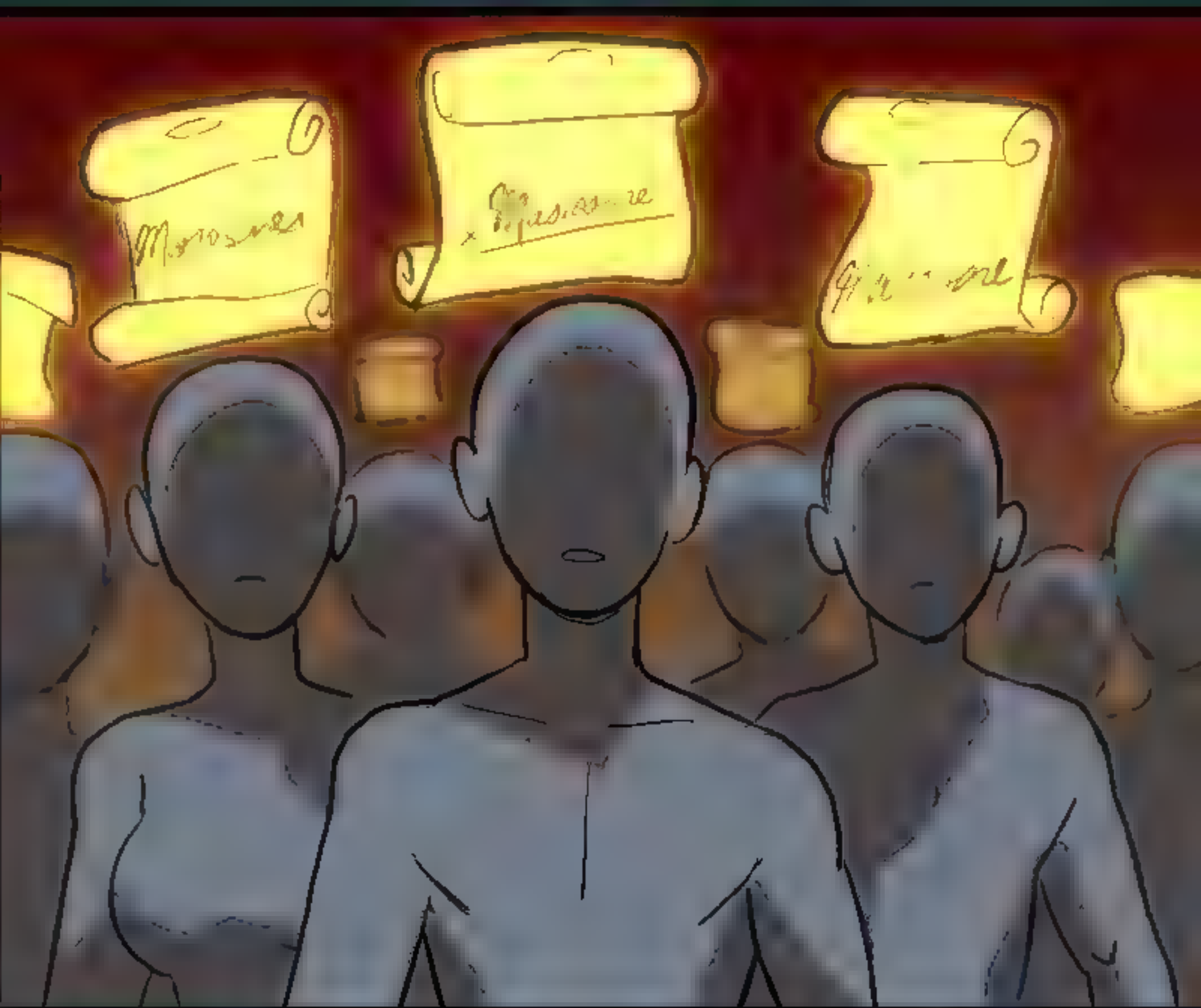

COULD HE NOT HAVE SENT THY SWORD TO THE CORRECT REALM AND LEFT YOU WITH AN INCORRECT MATCH TO AVOID SUSPICION?


EVEN IF HE
DID SEND MY SWORD
TO THE RIGHT REALM, IT
STILL HAD A PIECE MISSING.
THE SHARD WAS FASHIONED
INTO A DAGGER WHICH
GYRUS HAD HIDDEN.

WHY HIDE IT? IF HE FOUND BOTH PIECES, WHY NOT FIX THE SWORD?

TO PREVENT IT FROM FALLING INTO THE WRONG HANDS...

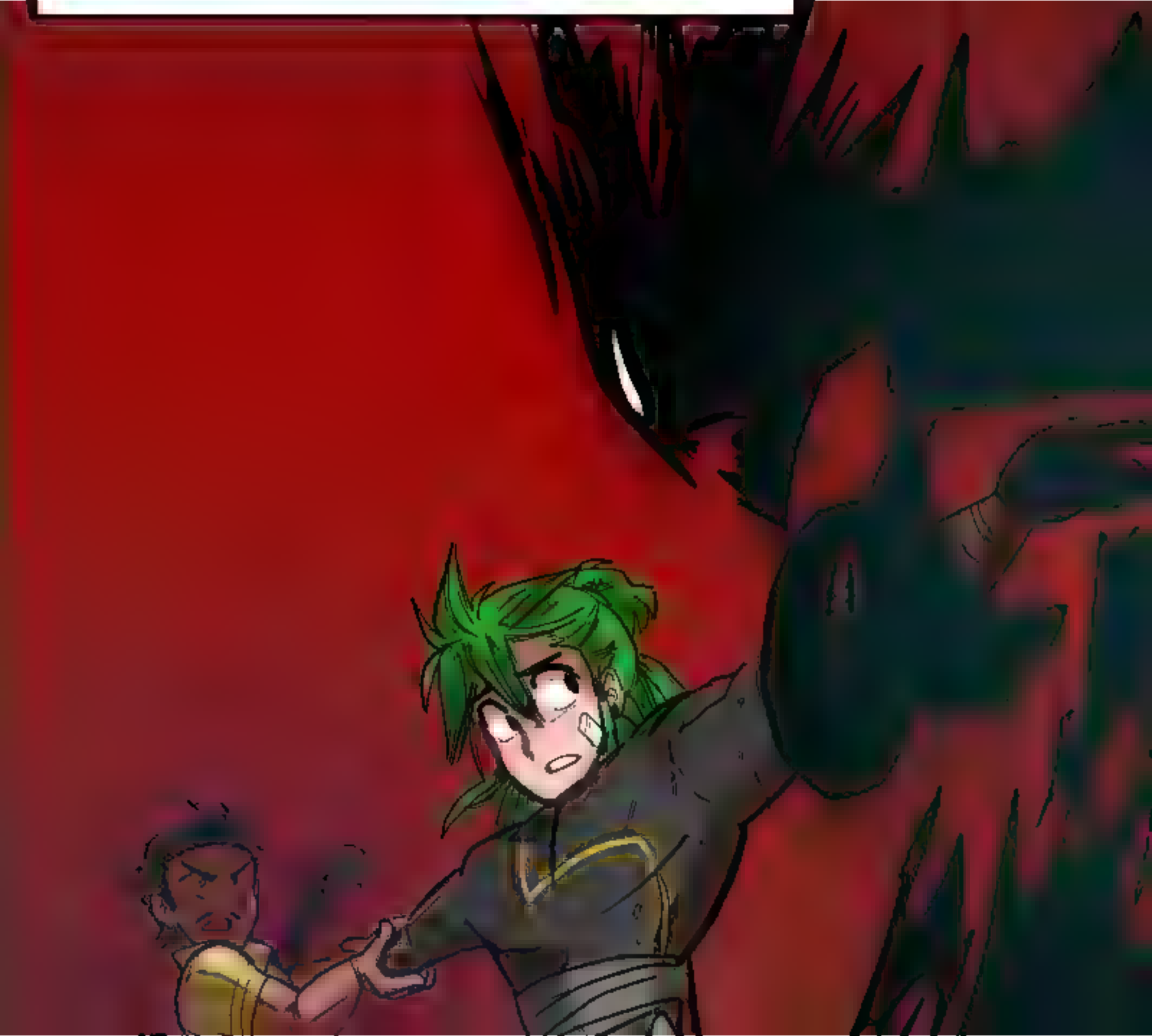

EVERYONE HAS A CONTRACT THAT PROMISES A WISH IN EXCHANGE FOR HELPING TO COMPLETE THE ROOM OF SWORDS...

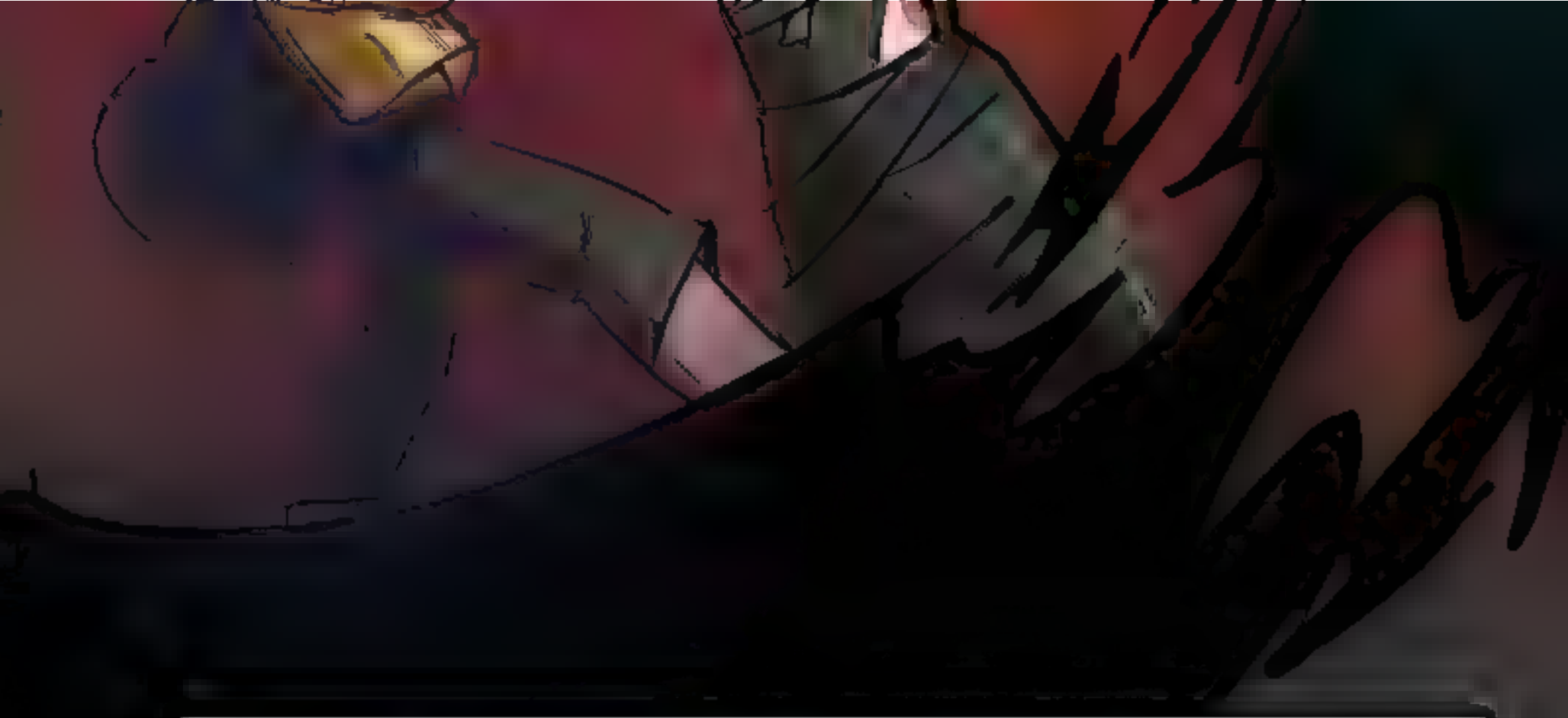


AND ALL OF THE AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE BETWEEN TWO PARTIES: THE INDIVIDUAL, AND A "MASIOSARE".

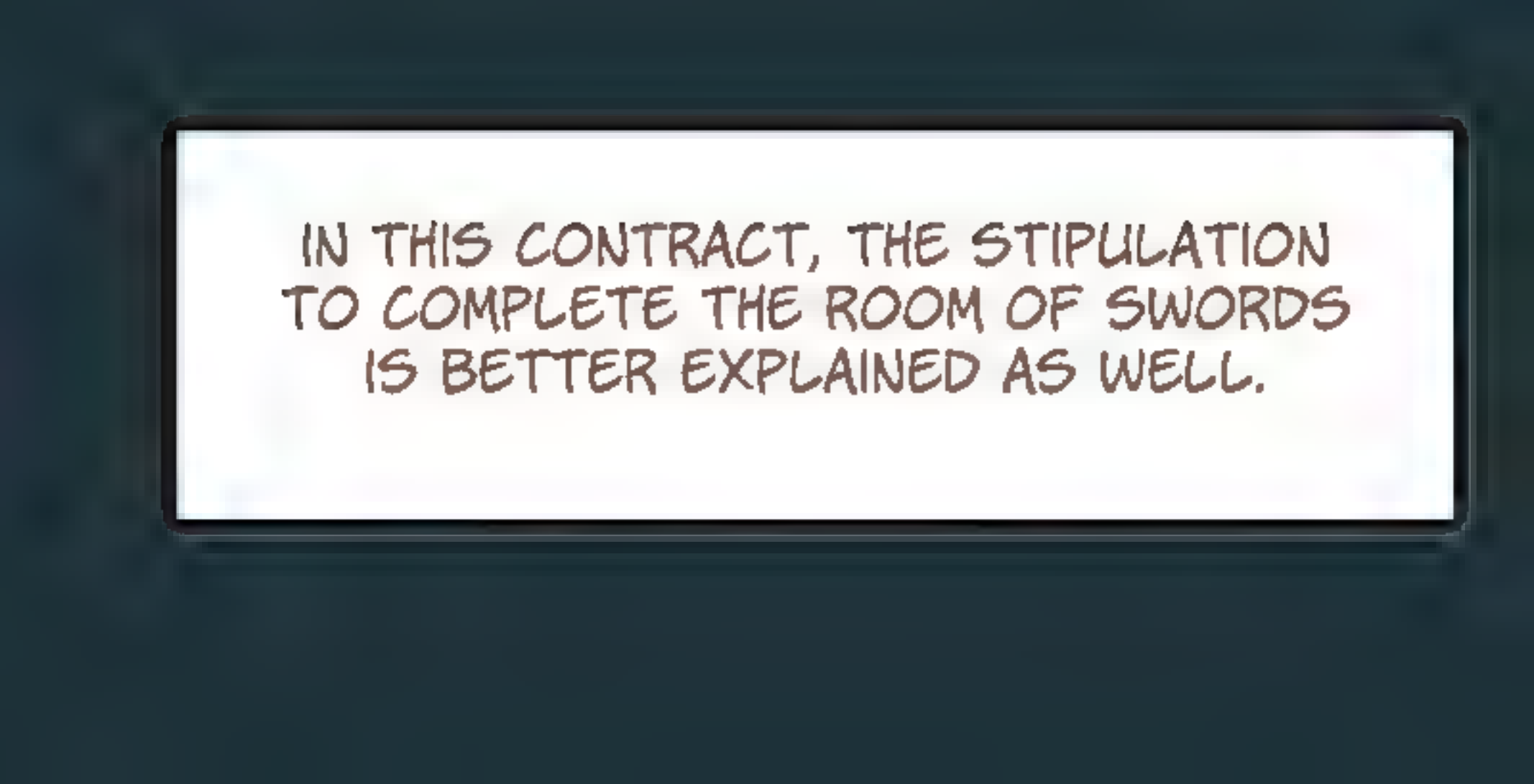
EXCEPT FOR GYRUS' CONTRACT... FIRST OF ALL, MASIOSARE IS NOTORIOUSLY MISSING, AND THE CONTRACT INVOLVES THREE PARTIES:

THE SHADOW AND DON SANTIAGO ARE COMPETING TO COLLECT THE 24 SWORDS TO WIN THE THIRD PARTY-- GYRUS-- AS A REWARD.

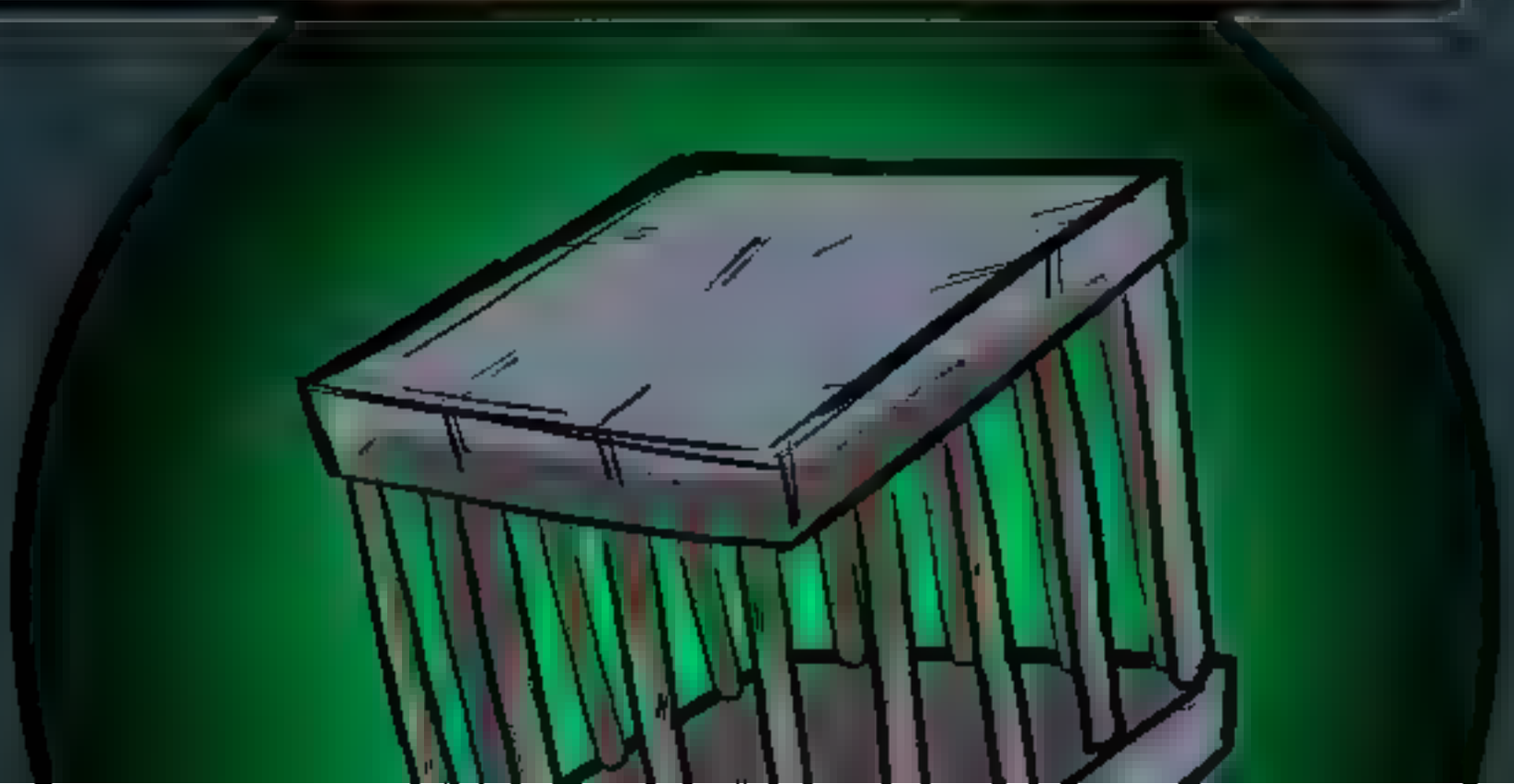




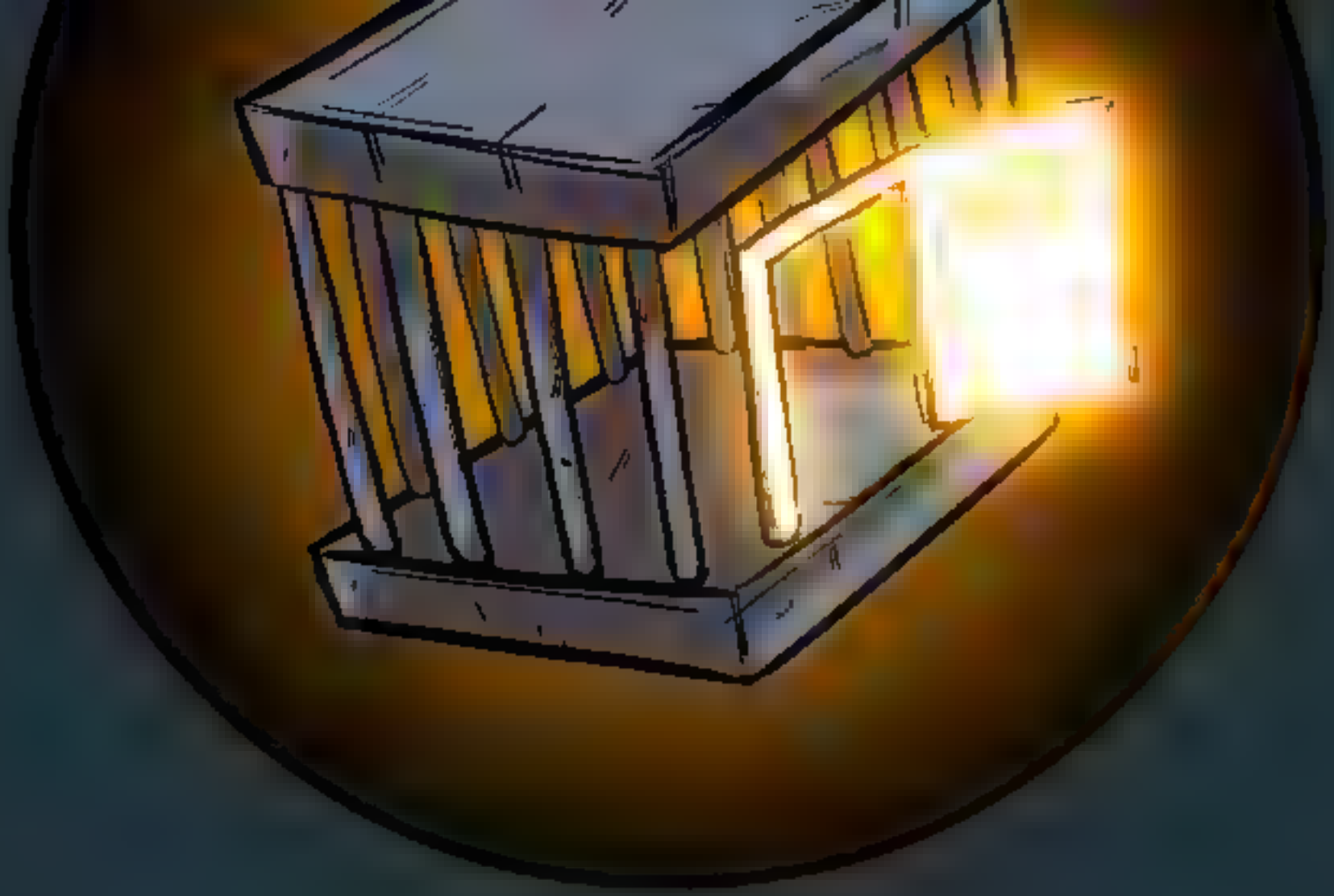
GYRUS' HAS NO CONTRACT WITH MASIOSARE, AND FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, HIS SOLE PURPOSE IN THIS WORLD IS TO USE THE SWORDS TO COMPLETE THE ROOM OF SWORDS THE WAY THAT THE CHAMPION DECIDES.


IN THIS CONTRACT, THE STIPULATION
TO COMPLETE THE ROOM OF SWORDS
IS BETTER EXPLAINED AS WELL.

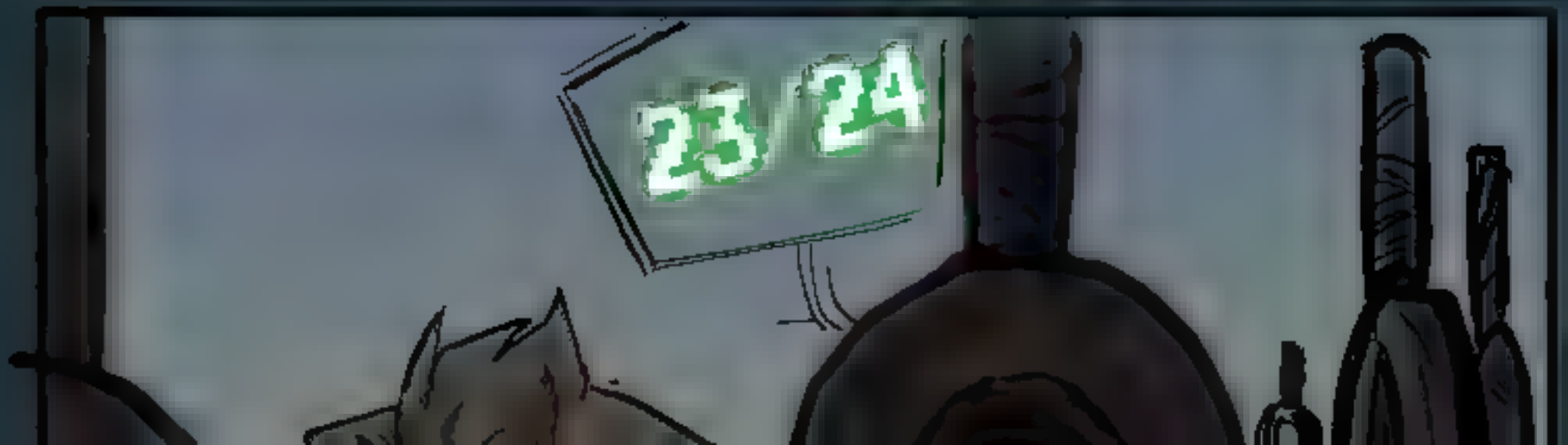
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, YOU MAY WISH TO THINK OF THE ROOM OF SWORDS AS A CAGE... THE SHADOWS WANT IT BUILT IN A CLOSED STATE, WITH NO MEANS TO ENTER OR LEAVE IT.

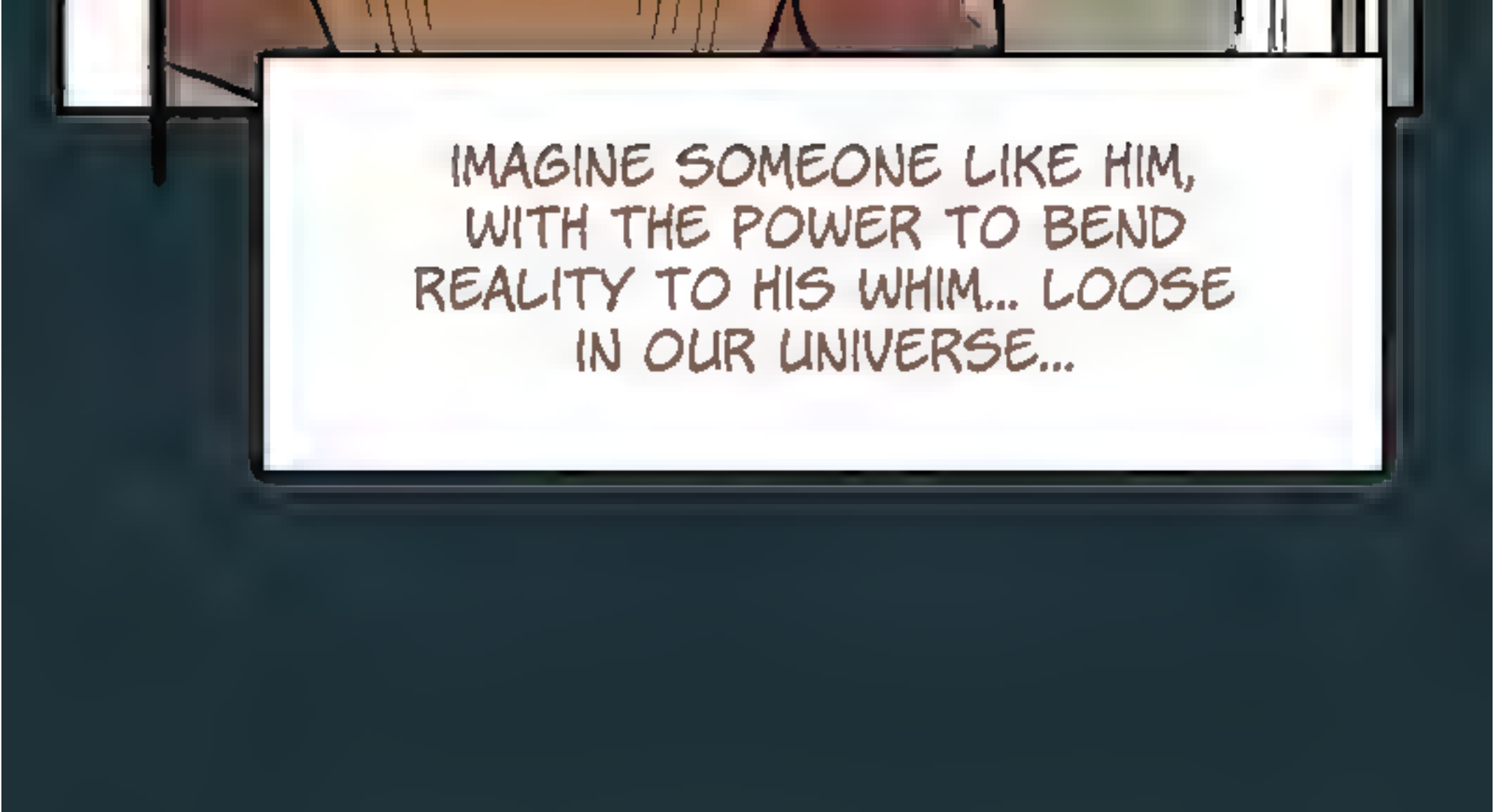


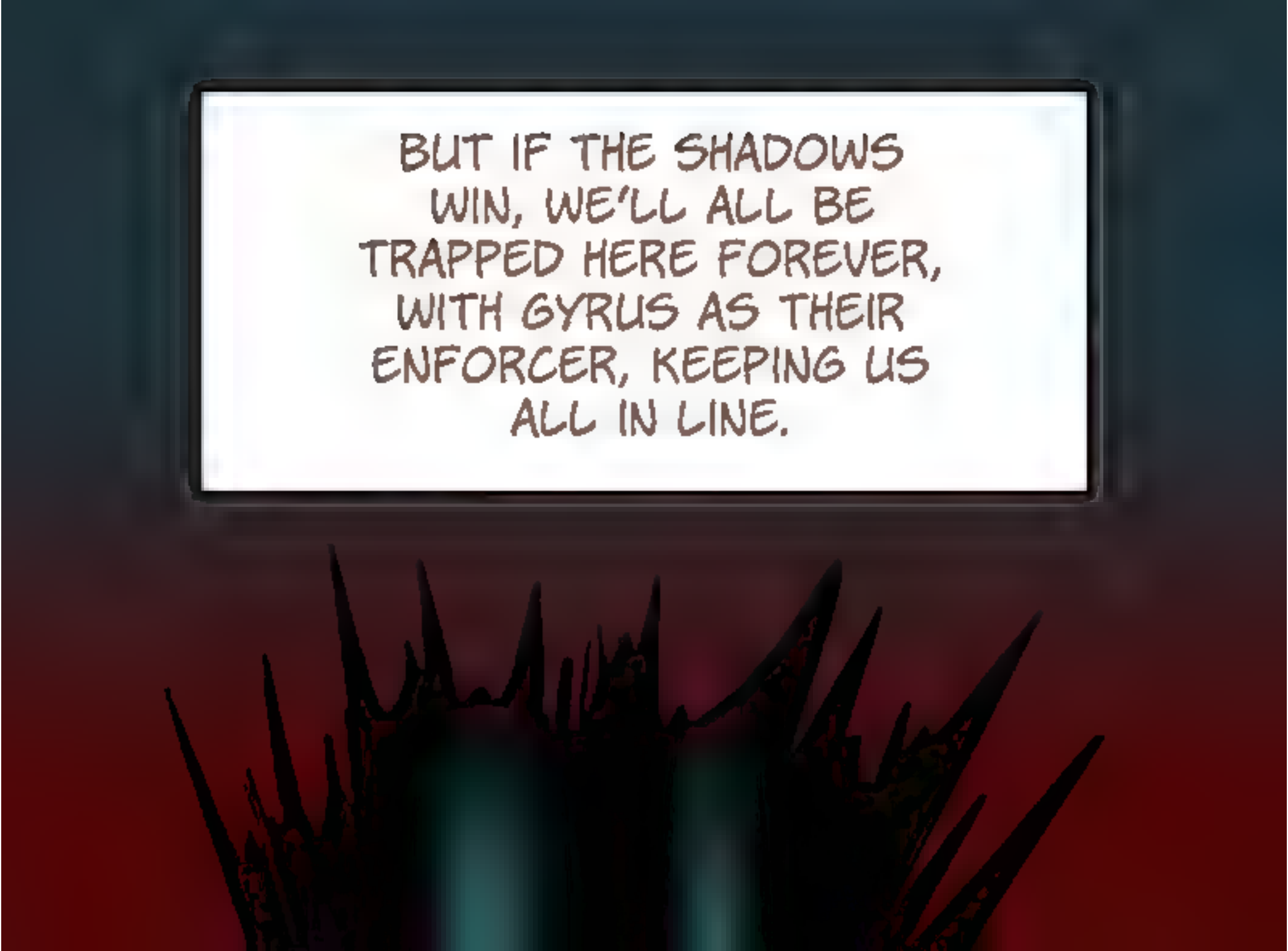
DON WANTS A DOOR.



IF DON WERE TO
COLLECT ALL 24 SWORDS FIRST,
GYRUS WILL BE FORCED
TO FREE HIM...



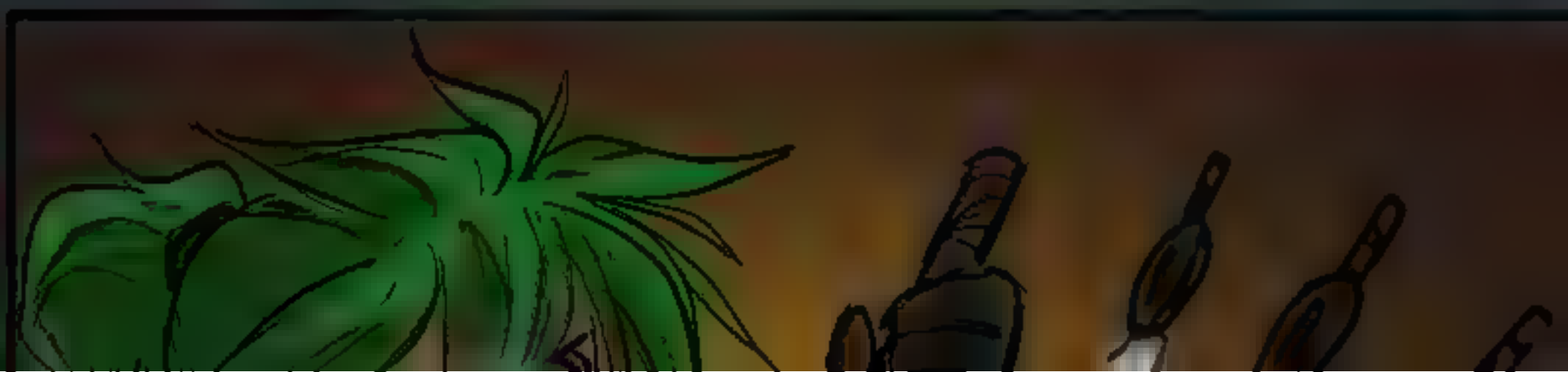

IMAGINE SOMEONE LIKE HIM, WITH THE POWER TO BEND REALITY TO HIS WHIM... LOOSE IN OUR UNIVERSE...


BUT IF THE SHADOWS WIN, WE'LL ALL BE TRAPPED HERE FOREVER, WITH GYRUS AS THEIR ENFORCER, KEEPING US ALL IN LINE.

THAT'S WHY THERE HAD TO BE A FAIL SAFE... TO PREVENT EITHER SIDE FROM ACHIEVING VICTORY IF THEY MANAGED TO FIND ALL OF THE SWORDS.

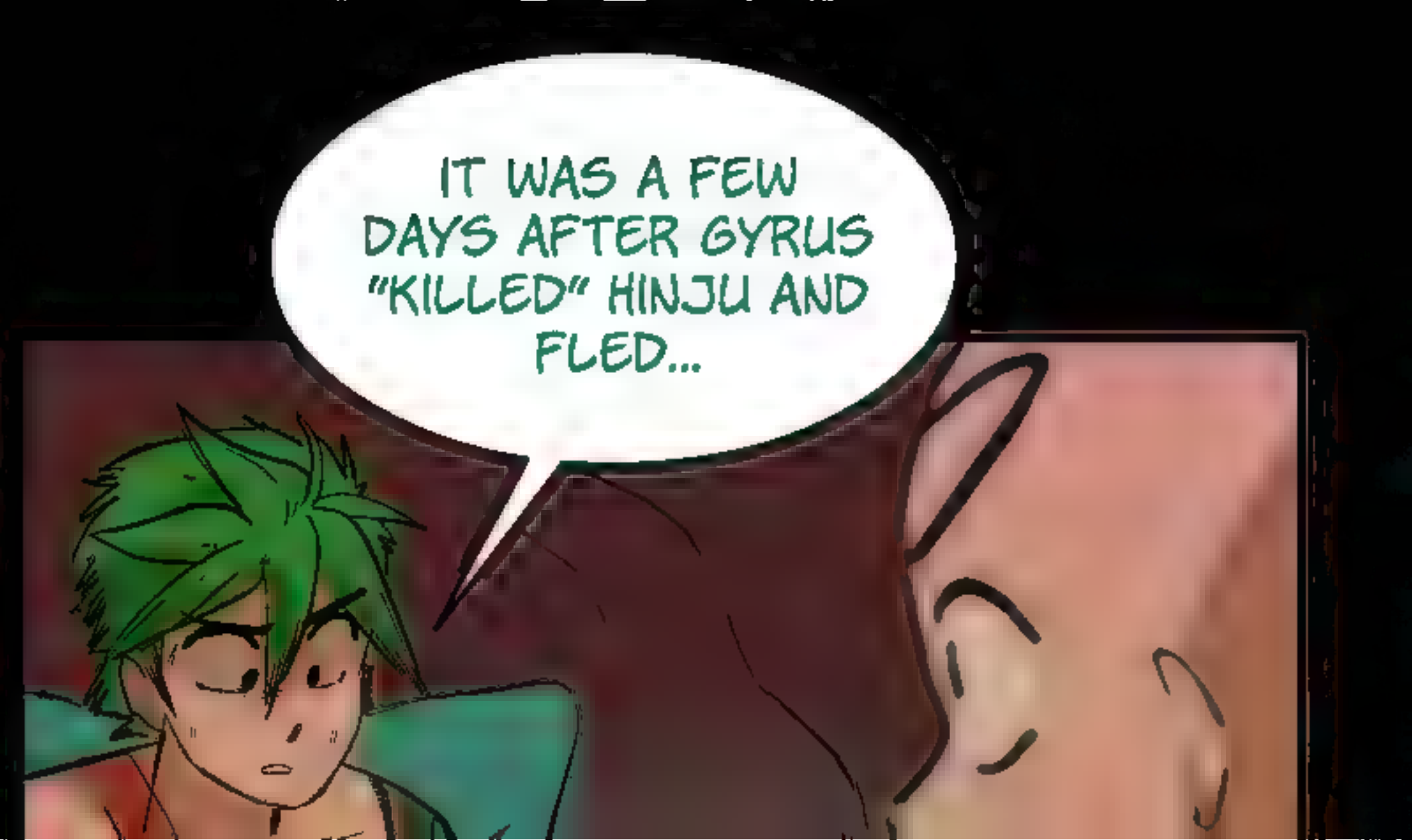
IN THE CASE, THE
BLADE WOULD STAY HIDDEN IN
THE CARE OF A TRUSTED ALLY.

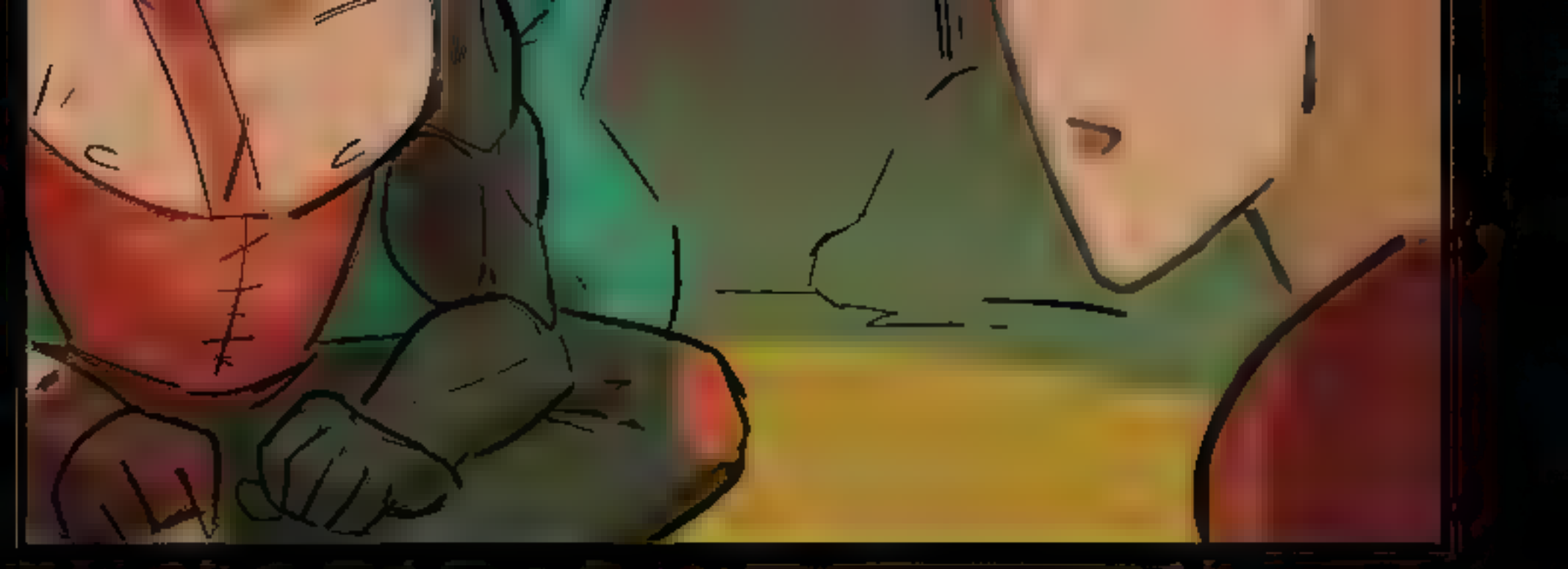
BUT IF GYRUS WERE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY INTERVENE... COLLECTING ALL 24 SWORDS HIMSELF, THEN THE ALLY WOULD COME FORWARD WITH THE DAGGER, GRANTING VICTORY TO GYRUS, AND FREEDOM TO MAKE HIS OWN CHOICE.



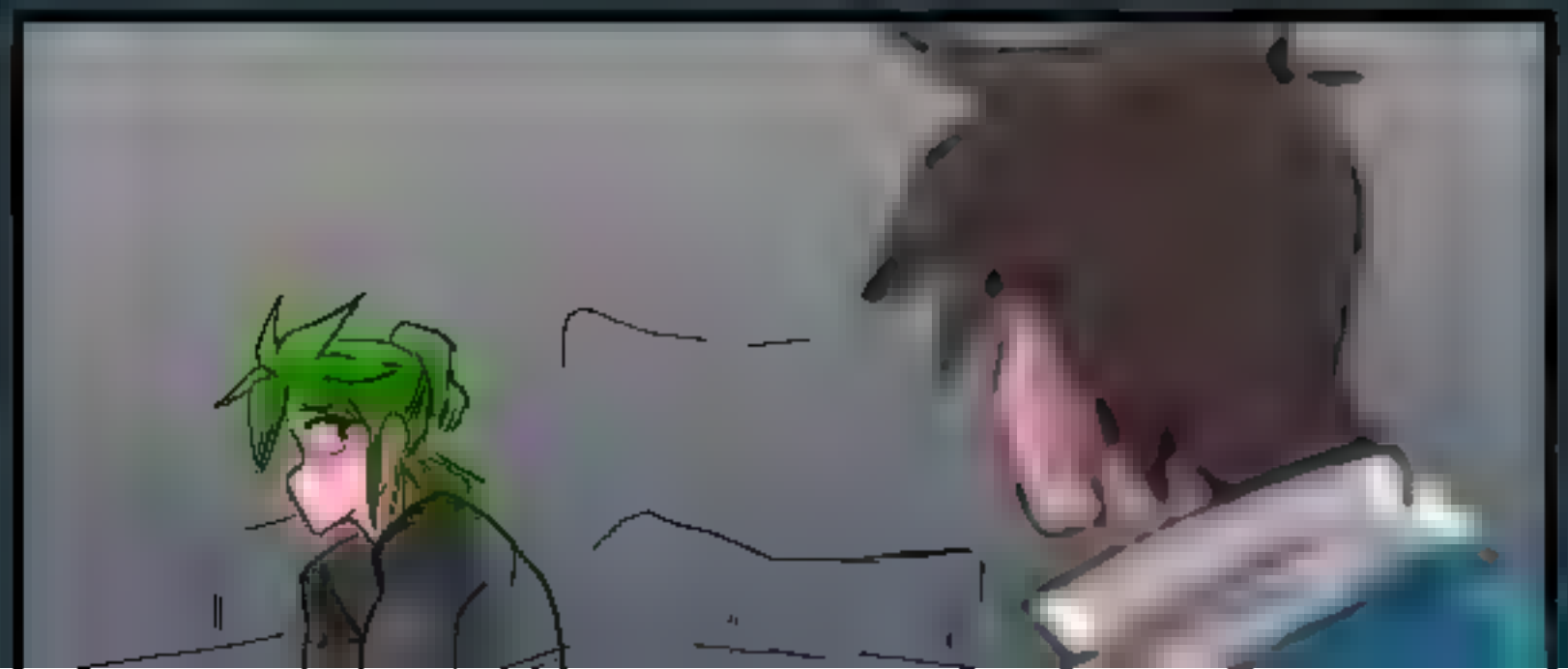
SINCE HIS VICTORY WOULD BE UNPRECEDENTED IN THE CONTRACTS, IT'S SURE TO BE CONTESTED. BUT GYRUS HAS THE ABILITY TO WIELD GREAT POWER WITH THE SWORDS, SO IF HE'S QUICK, HE CAN EXPLOIT THE LOOPHOLE-- DESTROYING THE ROOM OF SWORDS ALTOGETHER-- TO STOP DON OR THE SHADOWS FROM GETTING THEIR WISH.

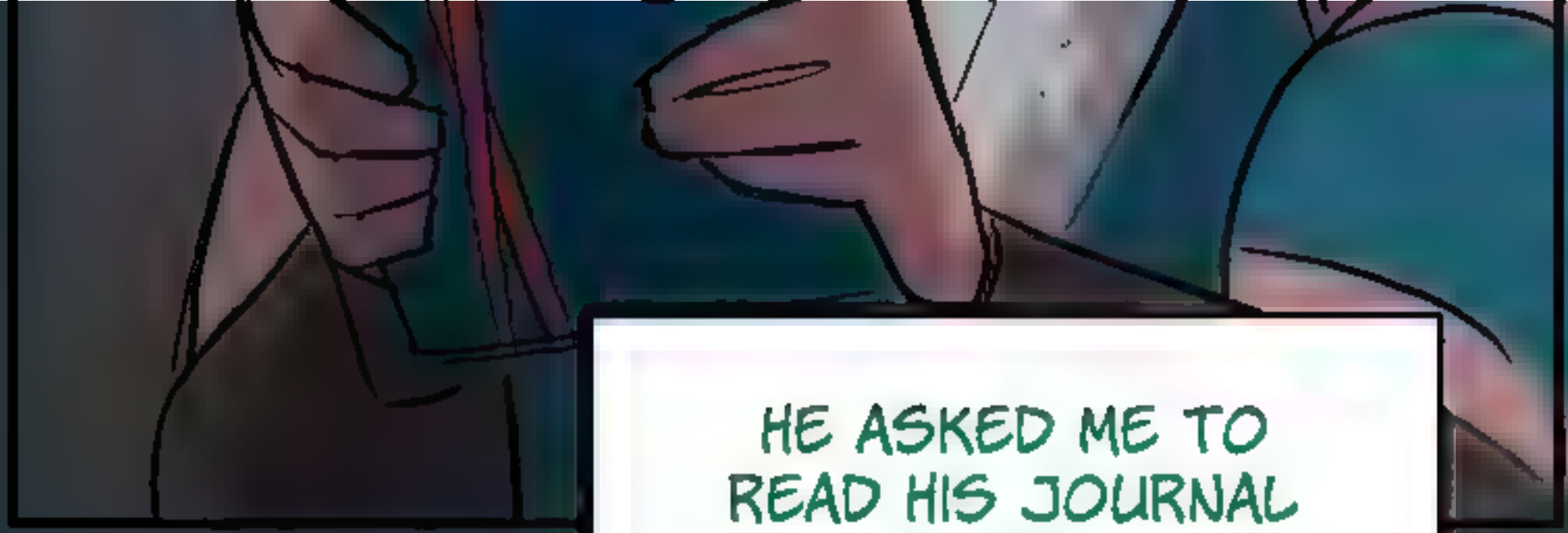
GYRUS GAVE THE DAGGER TO ME.


IT WAS A FEW DAYS AFTER GYRUS "KILLED" HINJU AND FLED...



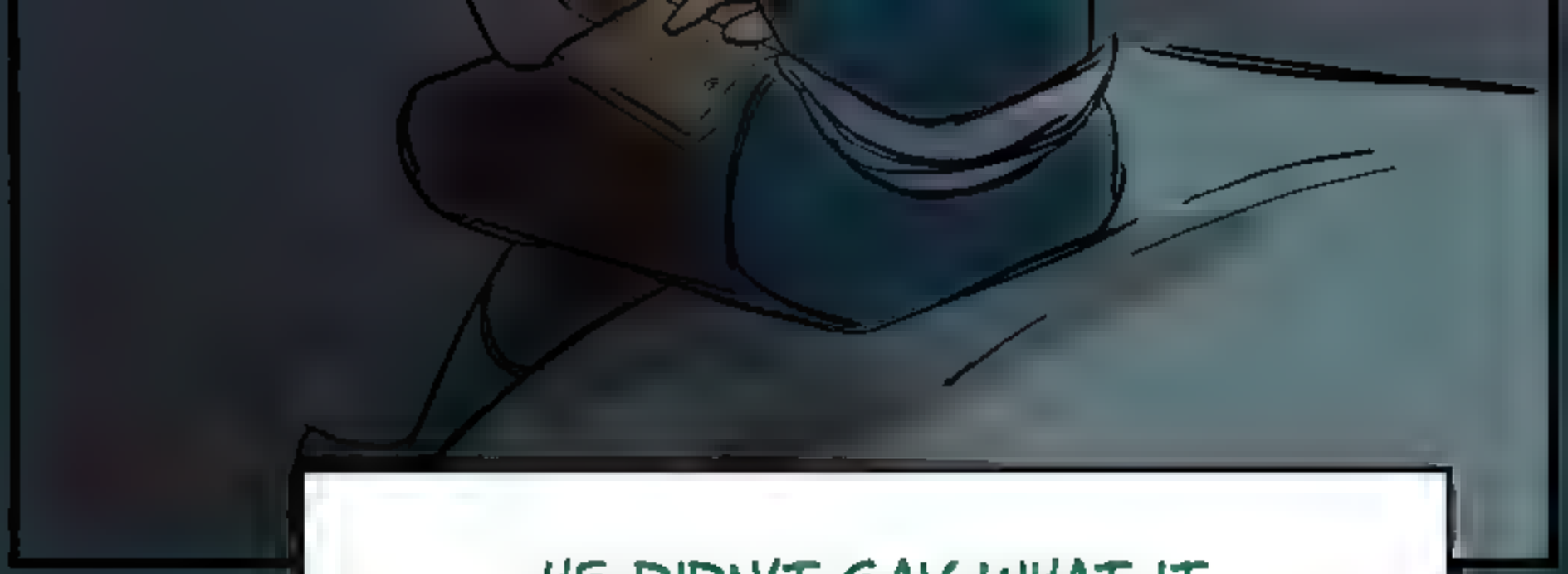
I FOUND HIM WAITING FOR ME IN OUR ROOM...





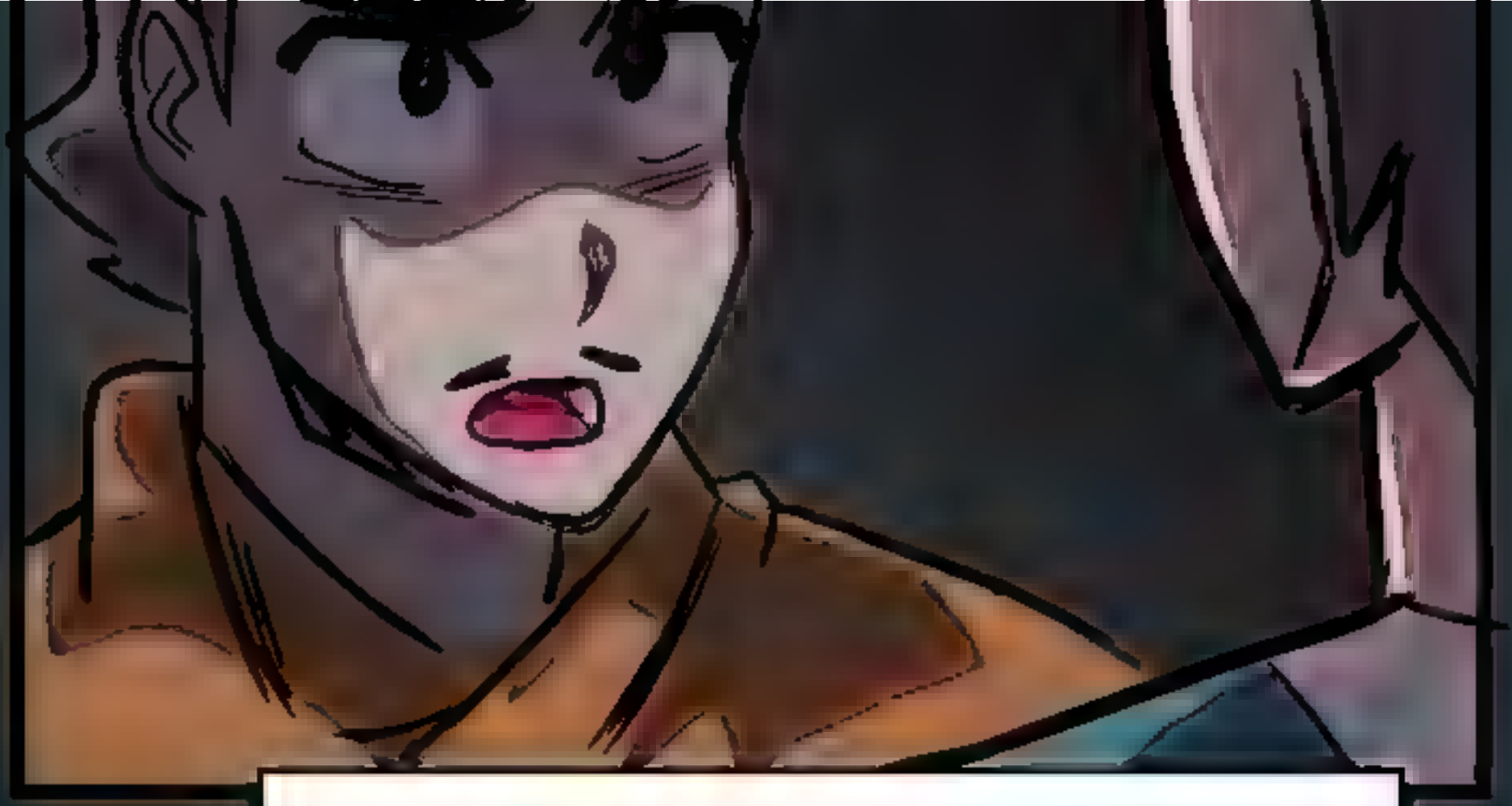
HE ASKED ME TO READ HIS JOURNAL AND THEN DECIDE WHETHER TO LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND AND JOIN HIM.

THERE WERE A LOT OF NOTES AND DIAGRAMS THAT THAT DIDN'T MEAN MUCH TO ME AT THE TIME, BUT THE LAST PAGE WAS A SET OF CODED INSTRUCTIONS TO FIND A DAGGER...



HE DIDN'T SAY WHAT IT WAS FOR, ONLY THAT IT HAD TO STAY HIDDEN UNTIL THE TIME WAS RIGHT, AND THAT IF I CHOSE TO LEAVE WITH GYRUS, I COULD NOT TELL HIM WHERE IT WAS.

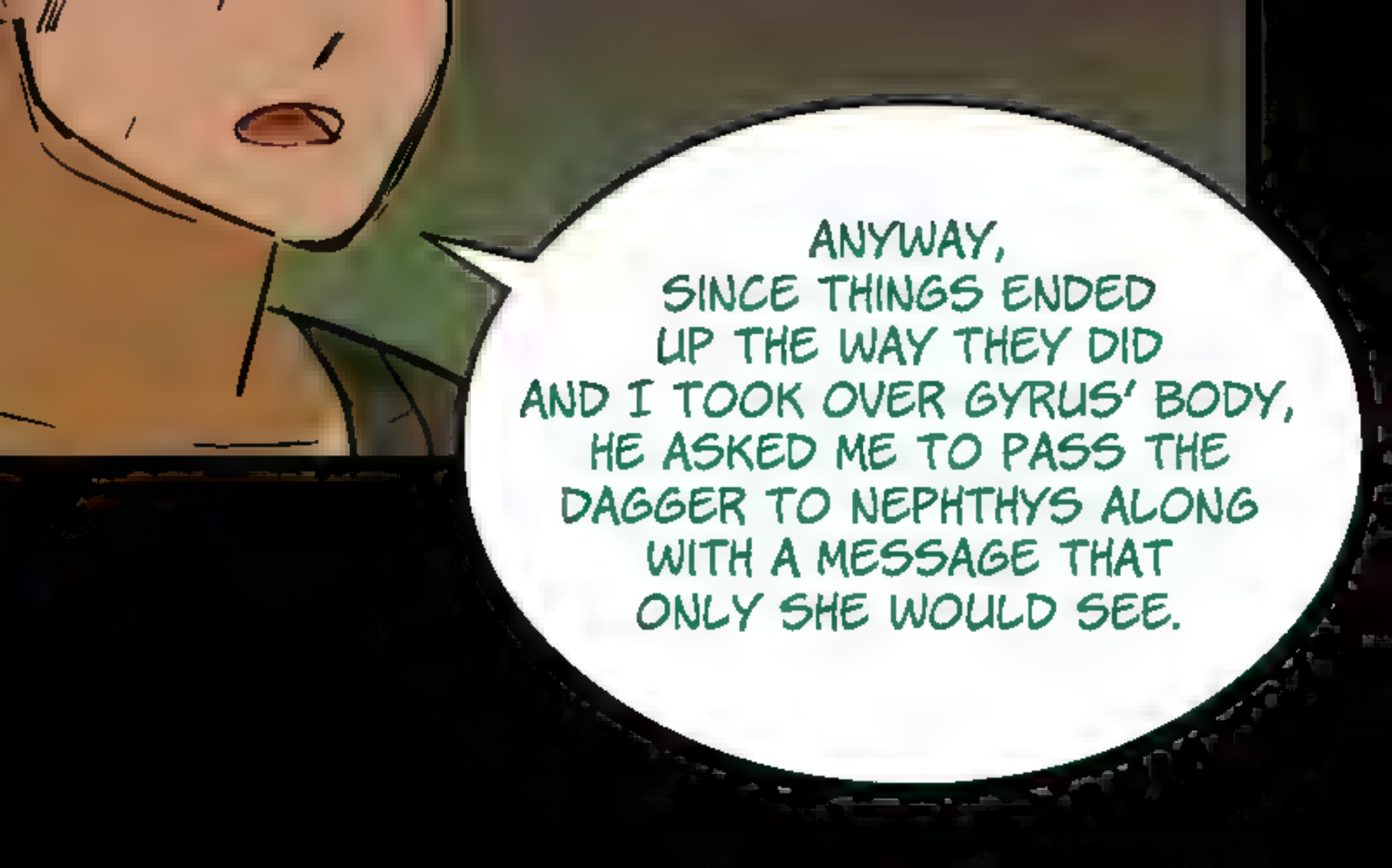
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO... I WANTED TO BELIEVE GYRUS. BUT THE WHOLE THING SEEMED STRANGE. AND DON WARNED US THAT GYRUS HAD GROWN DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE AND HOMICIDAL. HE SAID HE BELIEVED I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD CALM HIM IF HE RETURNED.



THE GUILT AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY WEIGHED HEAVILY... I CHOSE TO STAY. BUT I KEPT THE DAGGER A SECRET.

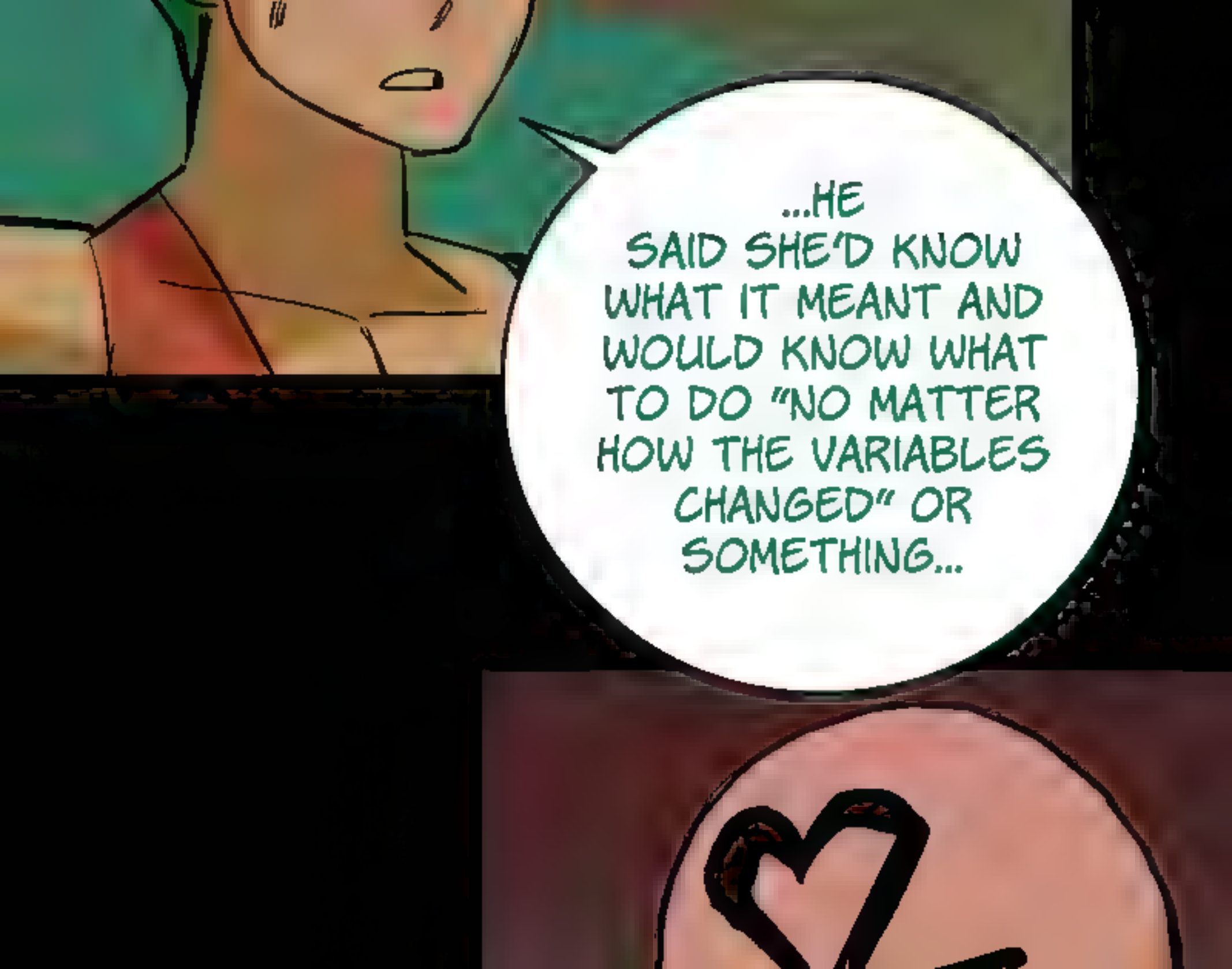
I CONCEALED IT
INSIDE THE JOURNAL
AND HID IT IN THE TRICK DRAWER,
THINKING IT WAS SAFE ENOUGH
SINCE I WAS THE ONLY ONE LEFT
IN THE ROOM OF SWORDS WHO
HAD ACCESS TO IT.

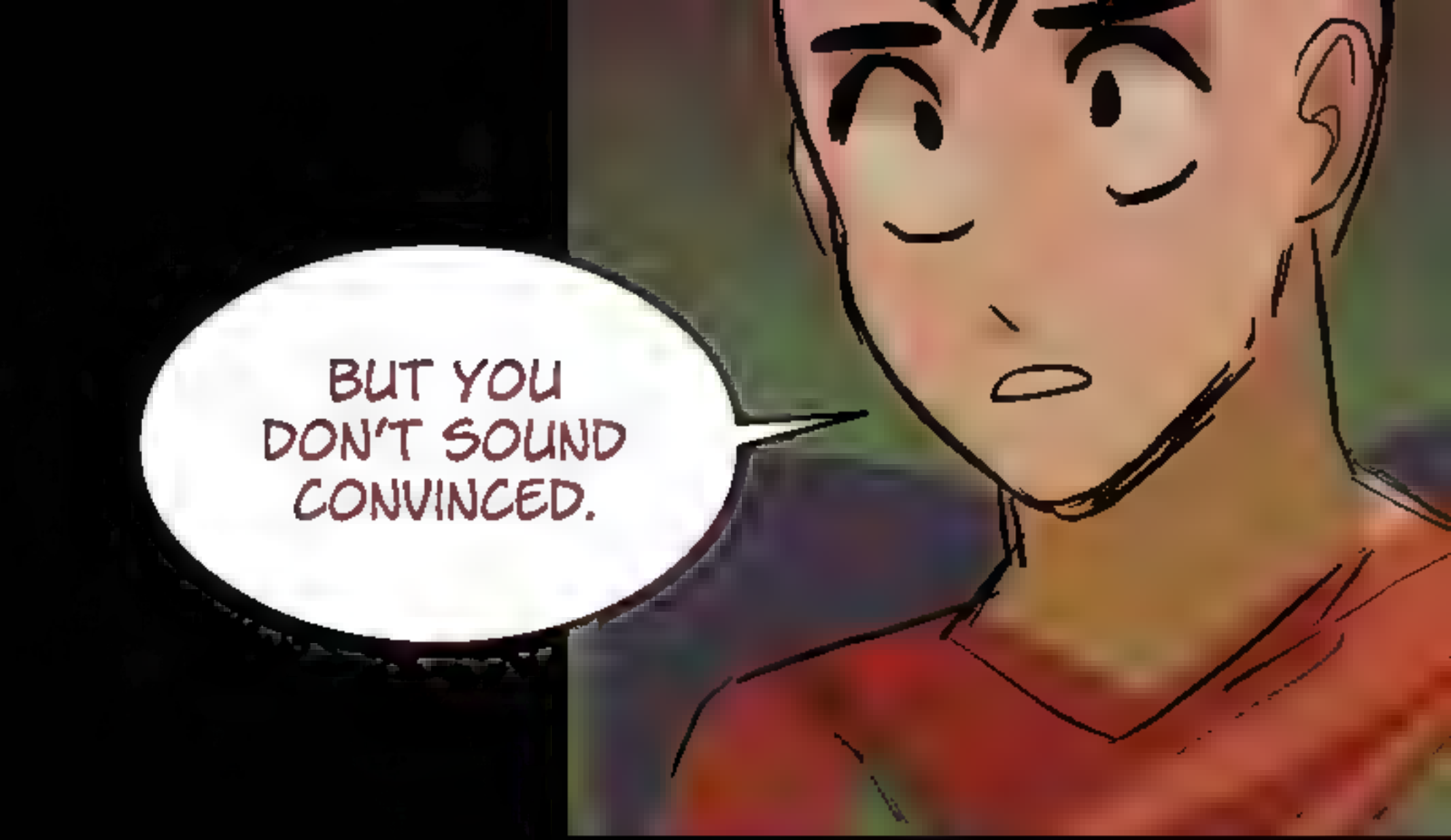
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE FOUND A BETTER SPOT, BUT HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS? I WAS BARELY SURE I BELIEVED IT WAS MORE THAN THE DELUSIONS OF A MAD MAN.

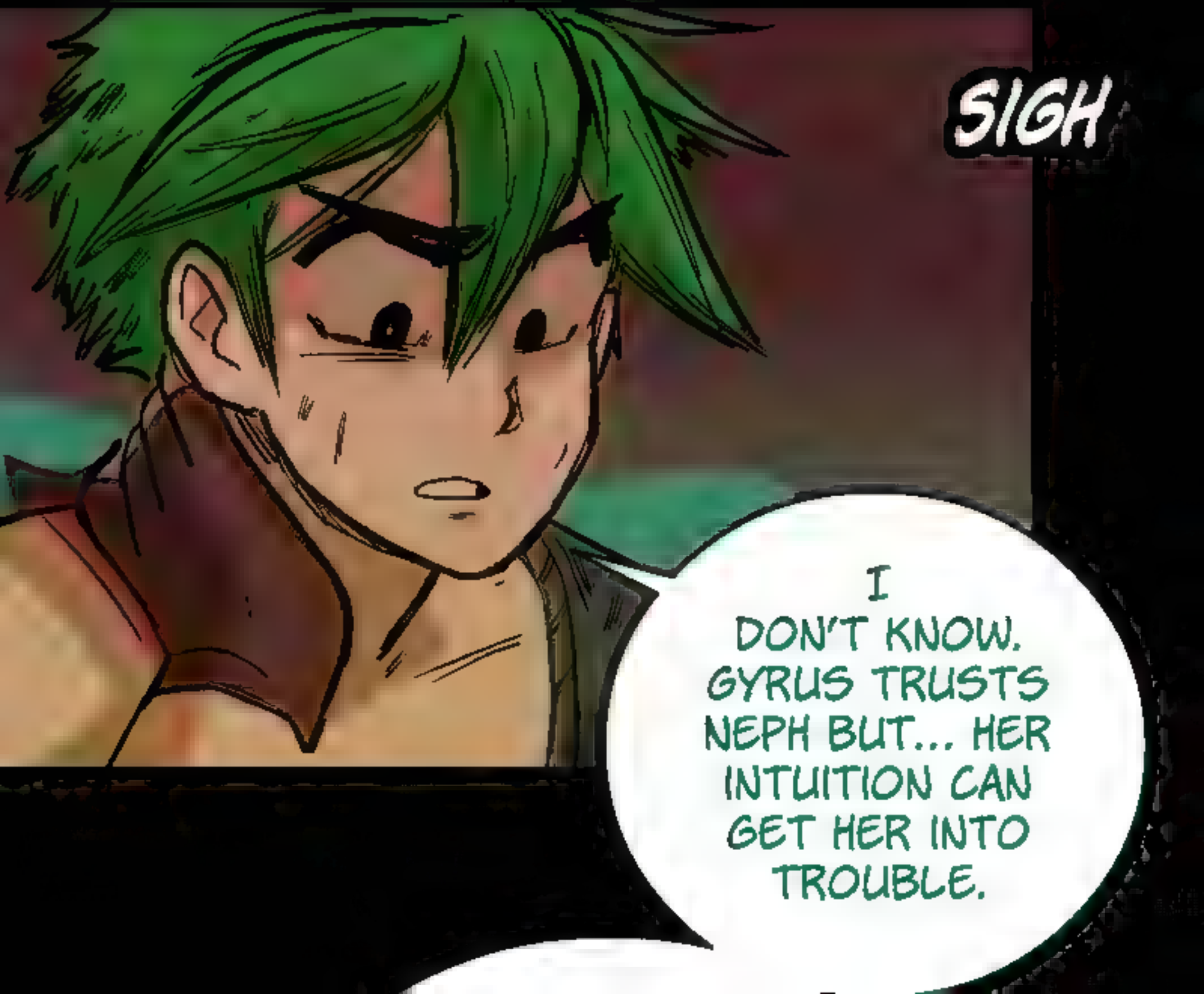

ANYWAY,
SINCE THINGS ENDED
UP THE WAY THEY DID
AND I TOOK OVER GYRUS' BODY,
HE ASKED ME TO PASS THE
DAGGER TO NEPHTHYS ALONG
WITH A MESSAGE THAT
ONLY SHE WOULD SEE.

WHAT MESSAGE?

"YOU'RE NEXT".

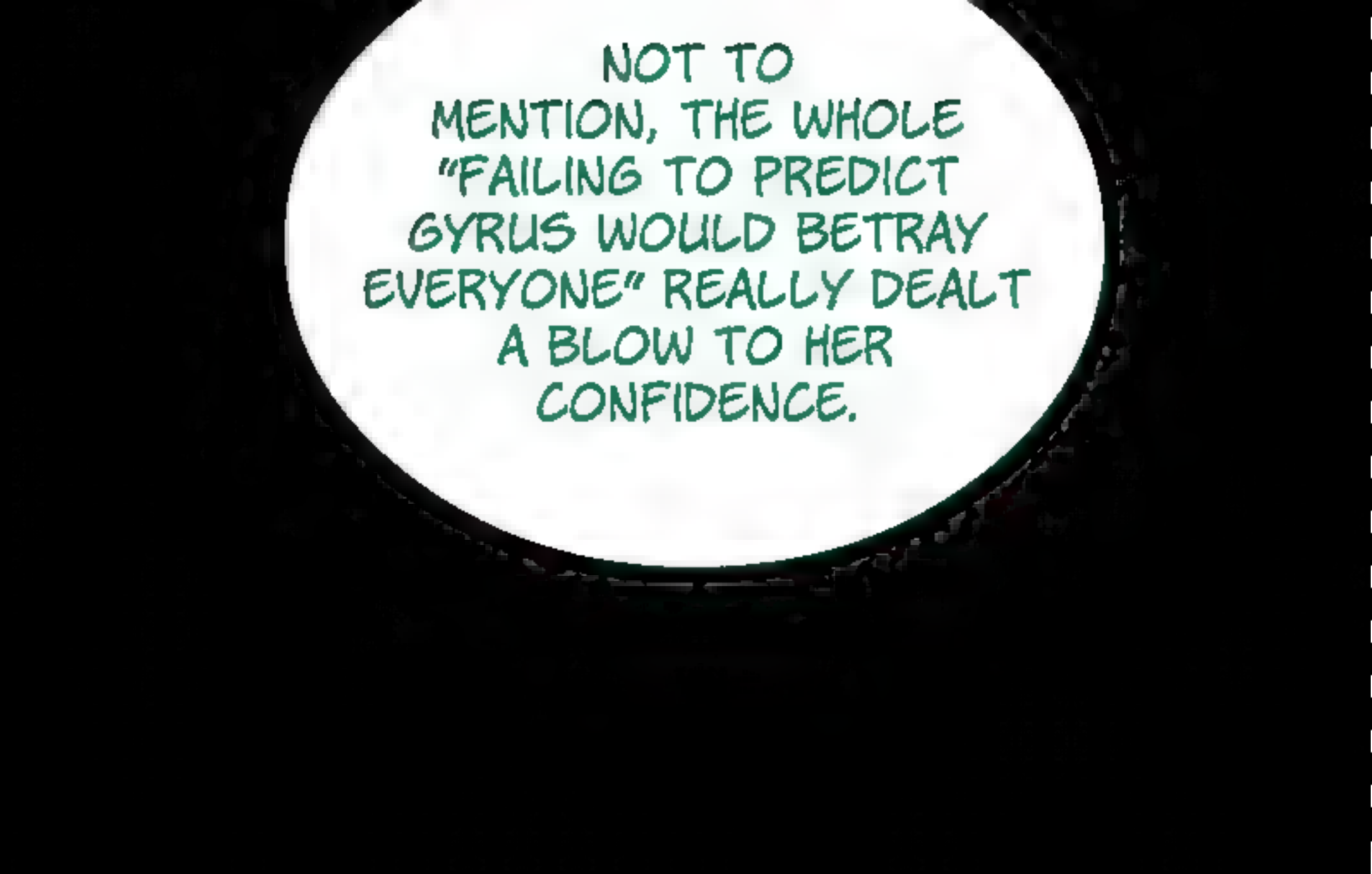

...HE SAID SHE'D KNOW WHAT IT MEANT AND WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO "NO MATTER HOW THE VARIABLES CHANGED" OR SOMETHING...

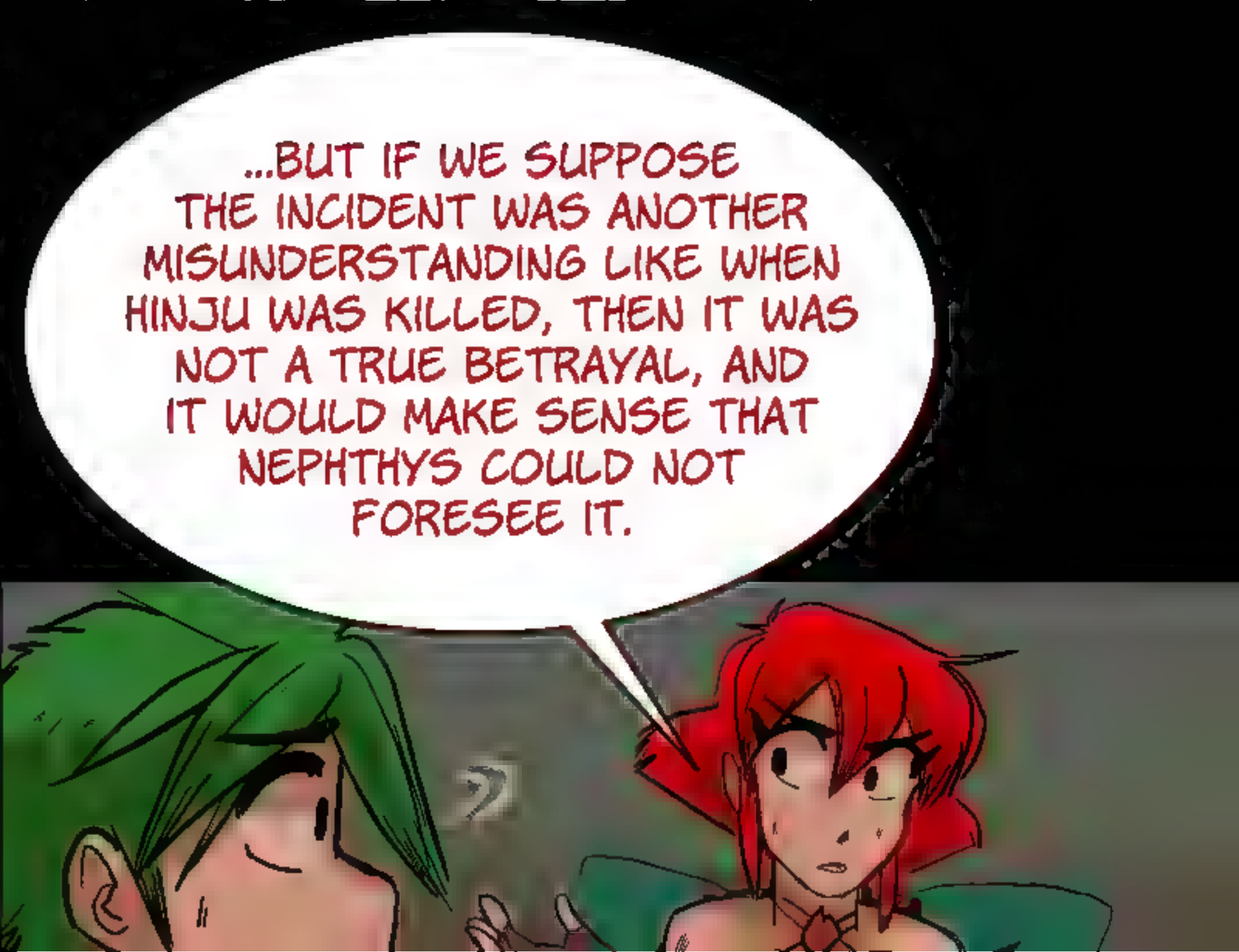

BUT YOU DON'T SOUND CONVINCED.


SIGH
I DON'T KNOW. GYRUS TRUSTS NEPH BUT... HER INTUITION CAN GET HER INTO TROUBLE.

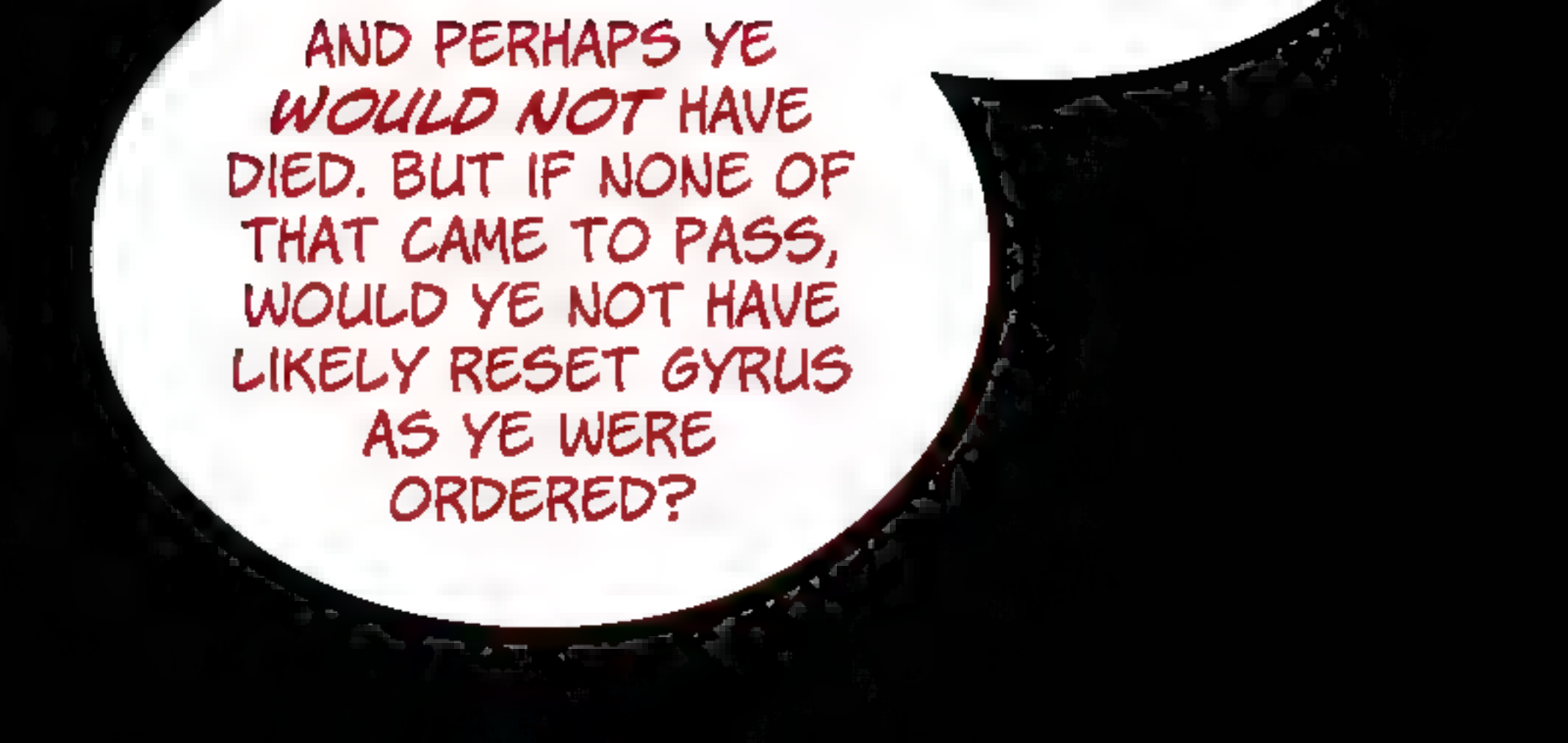
LIKE
WHEN SHE HAD A
"FEELING" SHE SHOULD
FOLLOW ME INTO THE
EYE MONSTER REALM
AND ACCIDENTALLY
HELPED CREATE A
NEW BOSS.

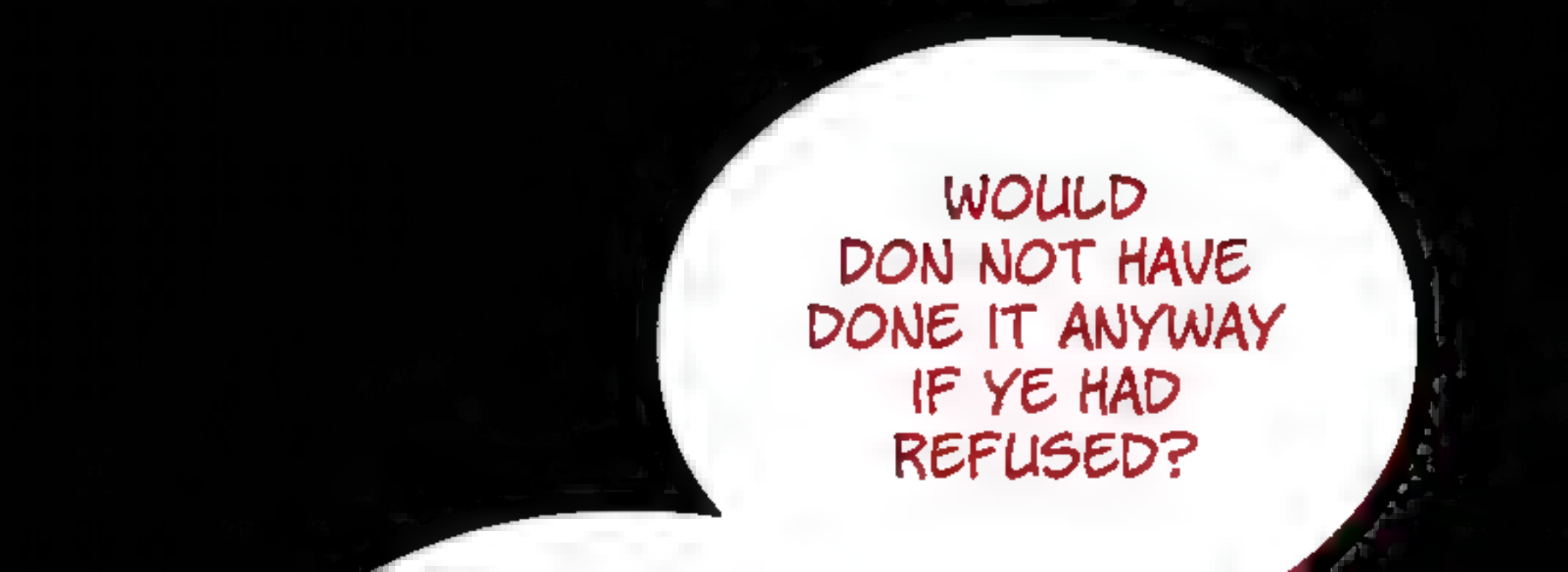
THAT MISTAKE COST US HEAVILY... I'D PROBABLY STILL BE IN MY OWN BODY IF NOT FOR THAT. SHE'S JUST NOT THE SAME AFTER THE INCIDENT...


NOT TO MENTION, THE WHOLE "FAILING TO PREDICT GYRUS WOULD BETRAY EVERYONE" REALLY DEALT A BLOW TO HER CONFIDENCE.


...BUT IF WE SUPPOSE THE INCIDENT WAS ANOTHER MISUNDERSTANDING LIKE WHEN HINJU WAS KILLED, THEN IT WAS NOT A TRUE BETRAYAL, AND IT WOULD MAKE SENSE THAT NEPHTHYS COULD NOT FORESEE IT.

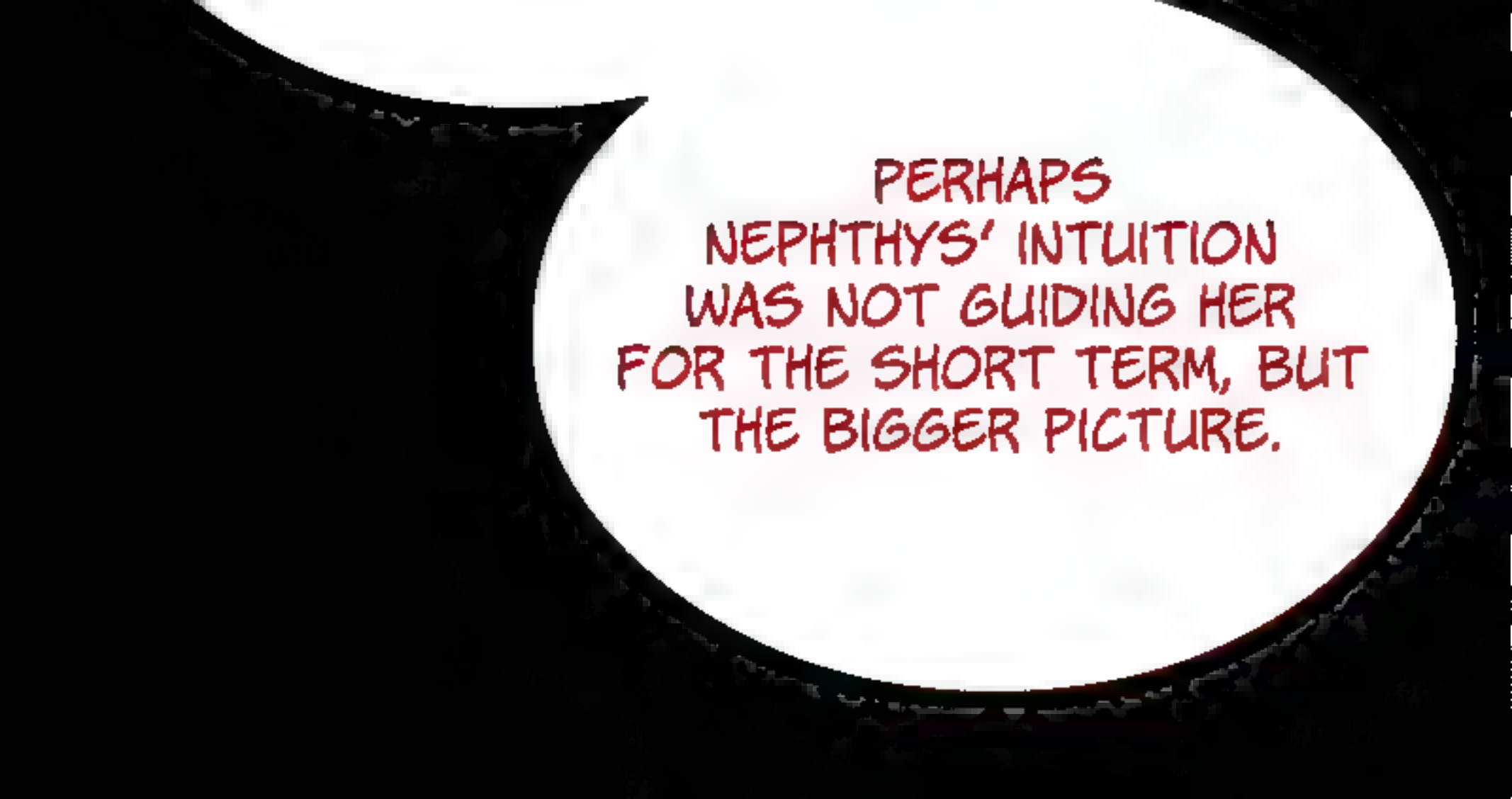
THAT ASIDE, PERHAPS YE WOULD HAVE COMPLETED THE REALM FASTER HAD NEPHTHYS NOT COME.


AND PERHAPS YE
WOULD NOT HAVE
DIED. BUT IF NONE OF
THAT CAME TO PASS,
WOULD YE NOT HAVE
LIKELY RESET GYRUS
AS YE WERE
ORDERED?


WOULD
DON NOT HAVE
DONE IT ANYWAY
IF YE HAD
REFUSED?

FOR THE ONLY THING THAT SPARED GYRUS OF THAT CRUEL FATE UPON RETURNING TO THE ROOM OF SWORDS WAS NEPHTHYS PLEADING FOR YOUR SOUL THAT WAS TRAPPED WITHIN HIM.

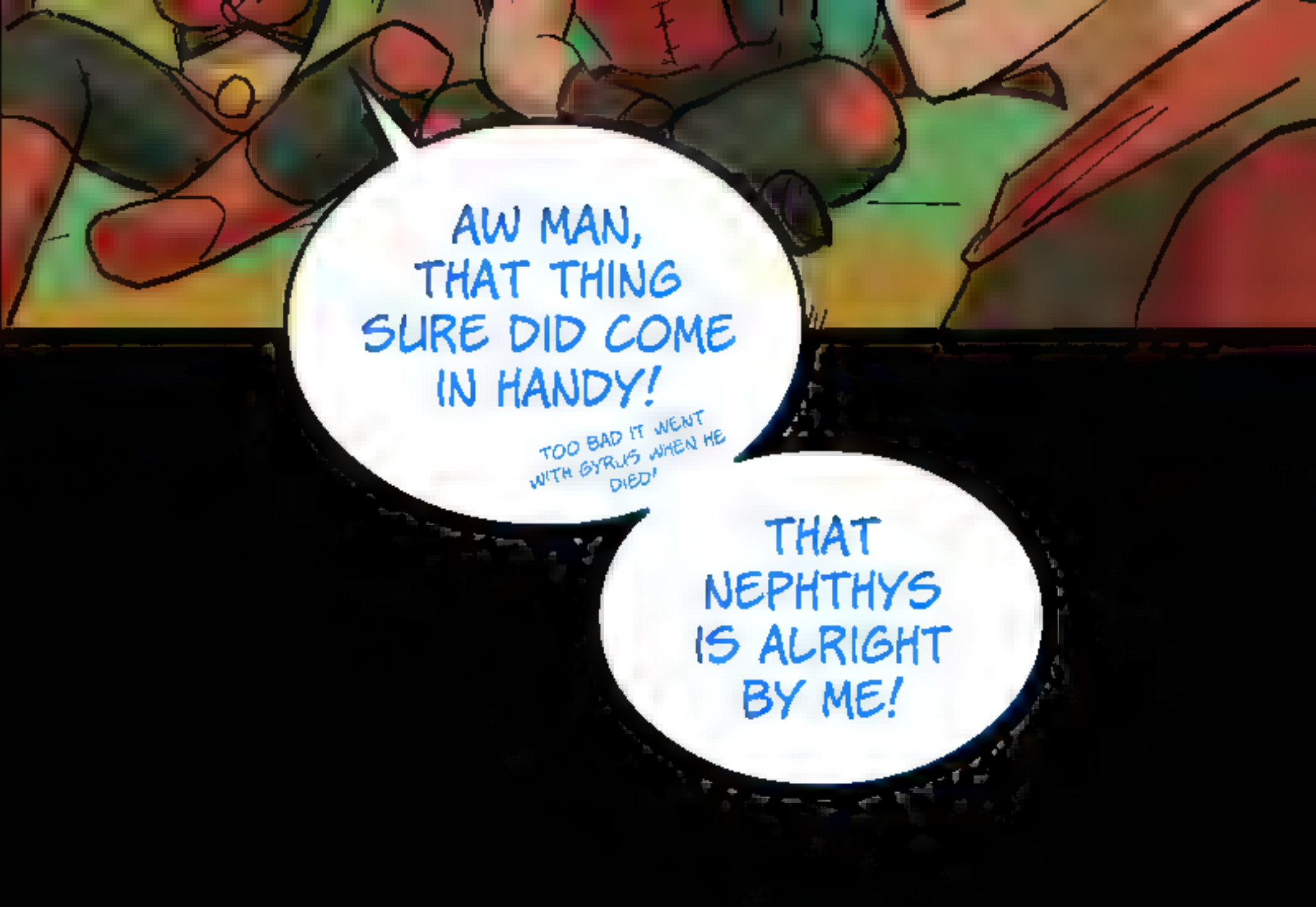
IF NOT FOR THAT, GYRUS WOULD HAVE PERISHED, DON WOULD BE HAVING HIS WAY RIGHT NOW, AND WE WOULD BE HELPING HIM NONE THE WISER.

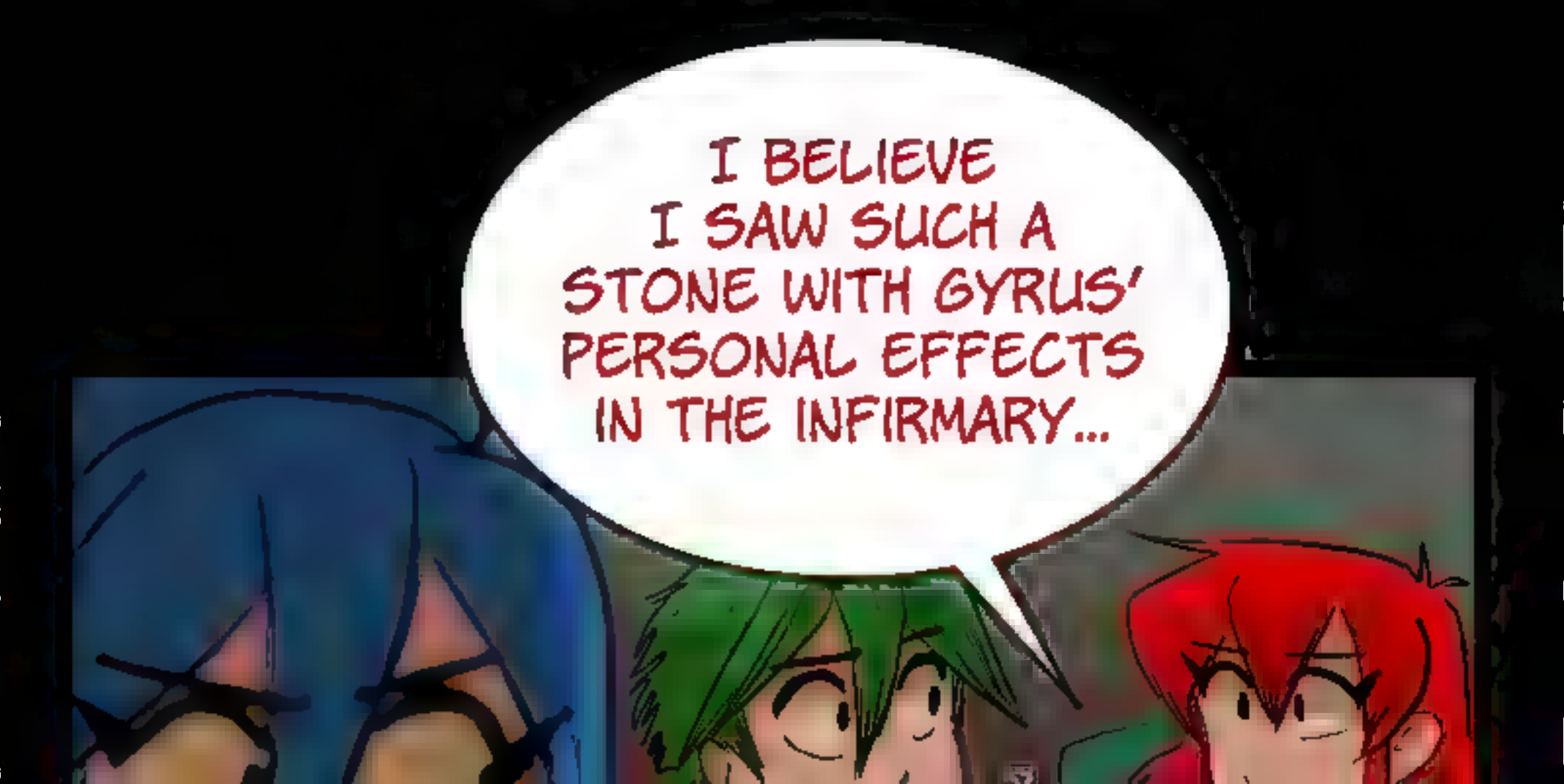

PERHAPS
NEPHTHYS' INTUITION
WAS NOT GUIDING HER
FOR THE SHORT TERM, BUT
THE BIGGER PICTURE.

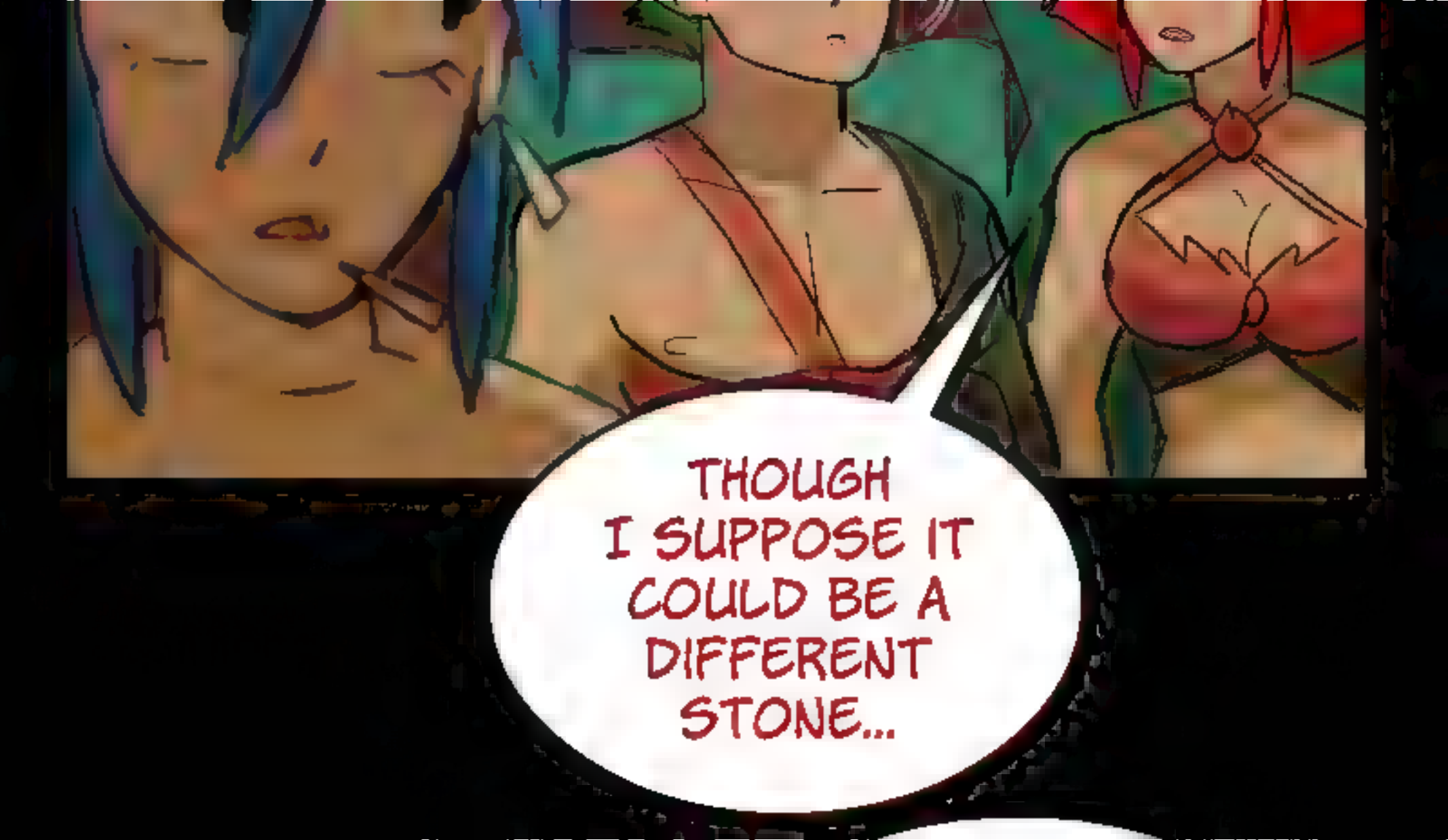
черт...
I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY.

"NEPHTHYS"...
IS THAT THE SAME CHICK THAT GAVE GYRUS THE PURPLE GLOW-IN-THE-DARK PSYCHIC ROCK?
T = "DAMN" (RUSSIAN)

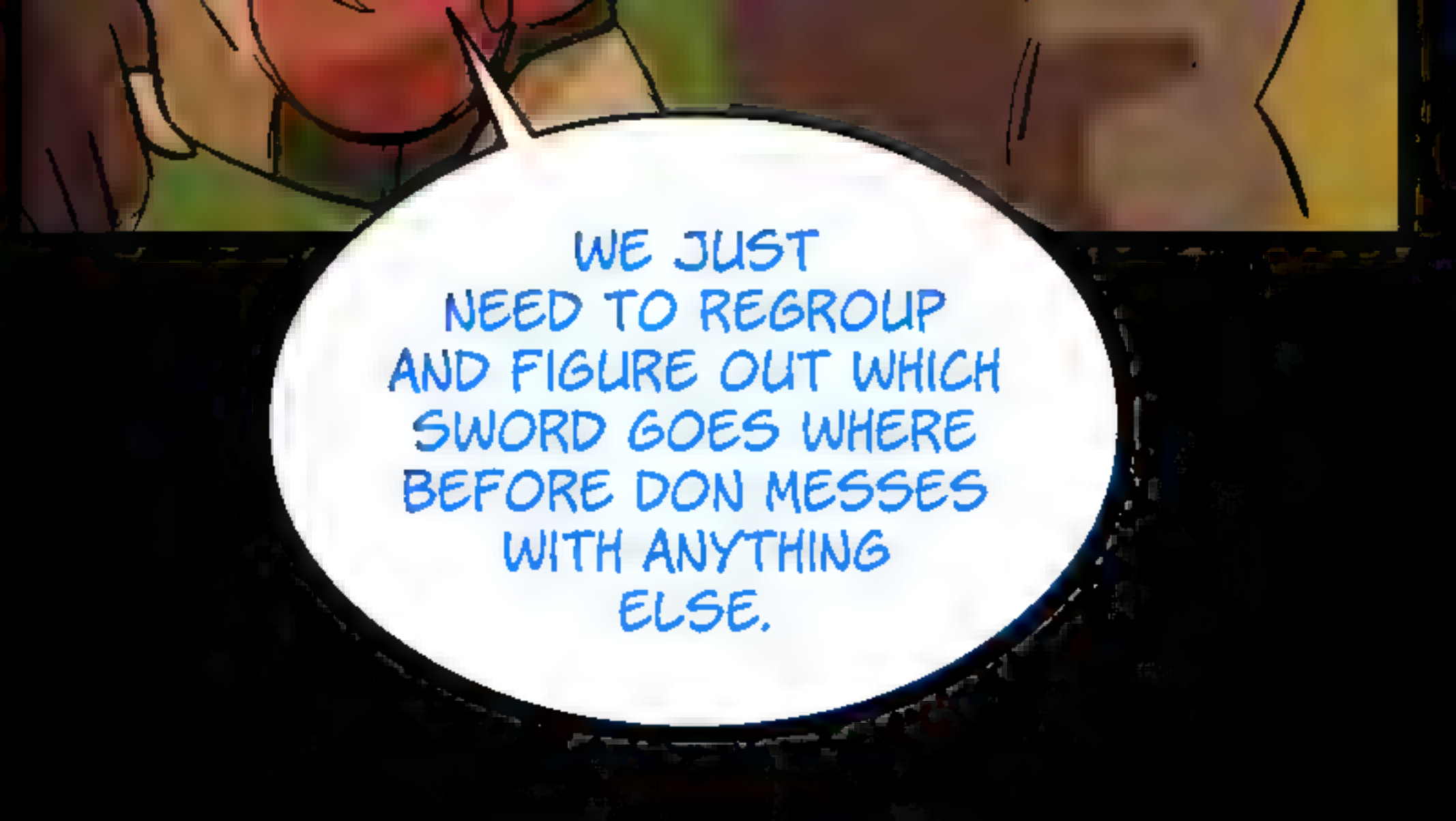
THE SHARE STONE, YES, THAT WAS NEPHTHYS!
YEAH, THAT!


AW MAN, THAT THING SURE DID COME IN HANDY!
TOO BAD IT WENT WITH GYRUS WHEN HE DIED!
THAT NEPHTHYS IS ALRIGHT BY ME!


I BELIEVE I SAW SUCH A STONE WITH GYRUS' PERSONAL EFFECTS IN THE INFIRMARY...


THOUGH I SUPPOSE IT COULD BE A DIFFERENT STONE...

WHETHER IT WAS OR WASN'T, IT DOESN'T DO US ANY GOOD NOW...


WE JUST
NEED TO REGROUP
AND FIGURE OUT WHICH
SWORD GOES WHERE
BEFORE DON MESSES
WITH ANYTHING
ELSE.

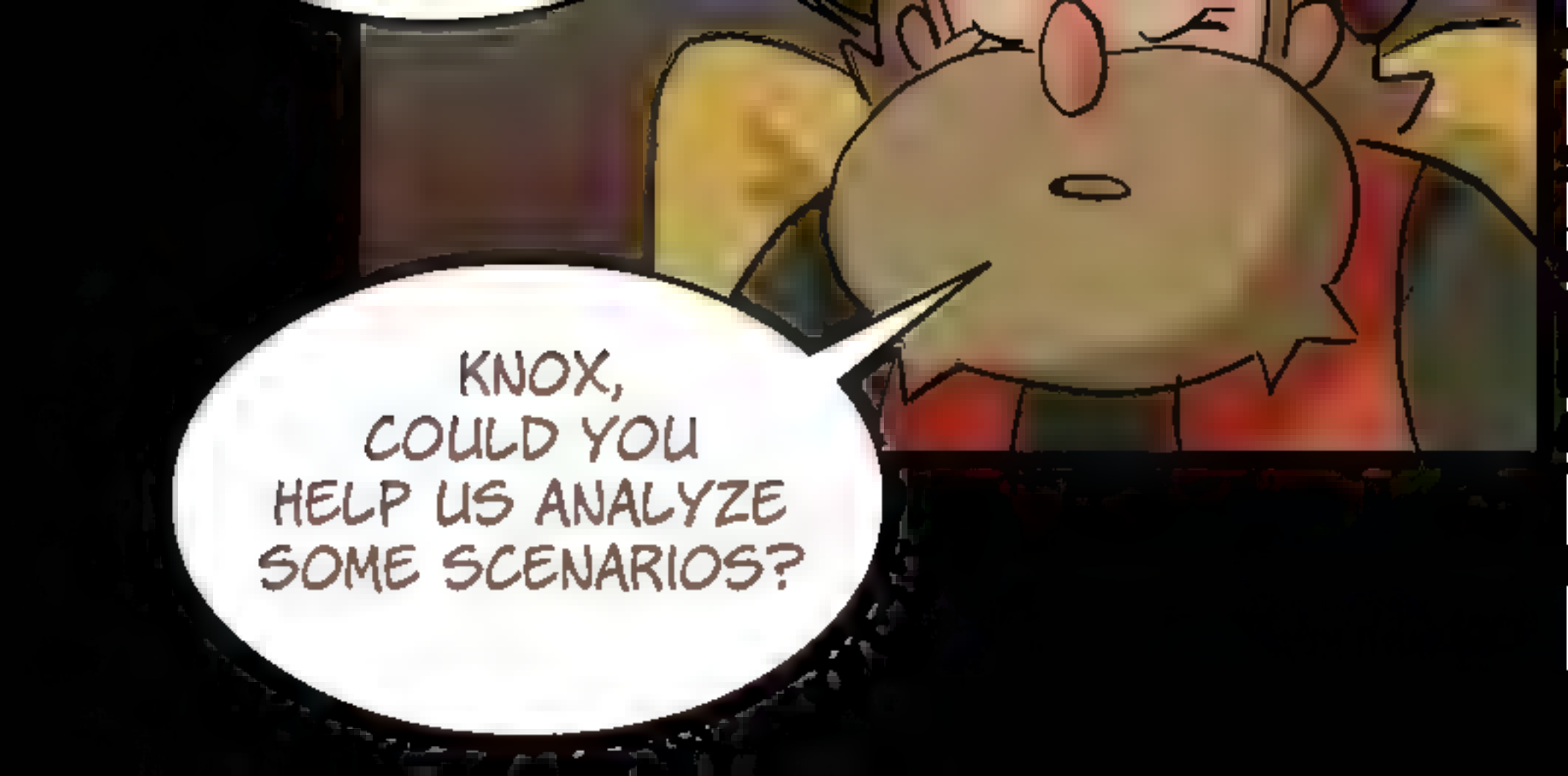
HOLD ON, WHAT IF IT'S A TRAP?

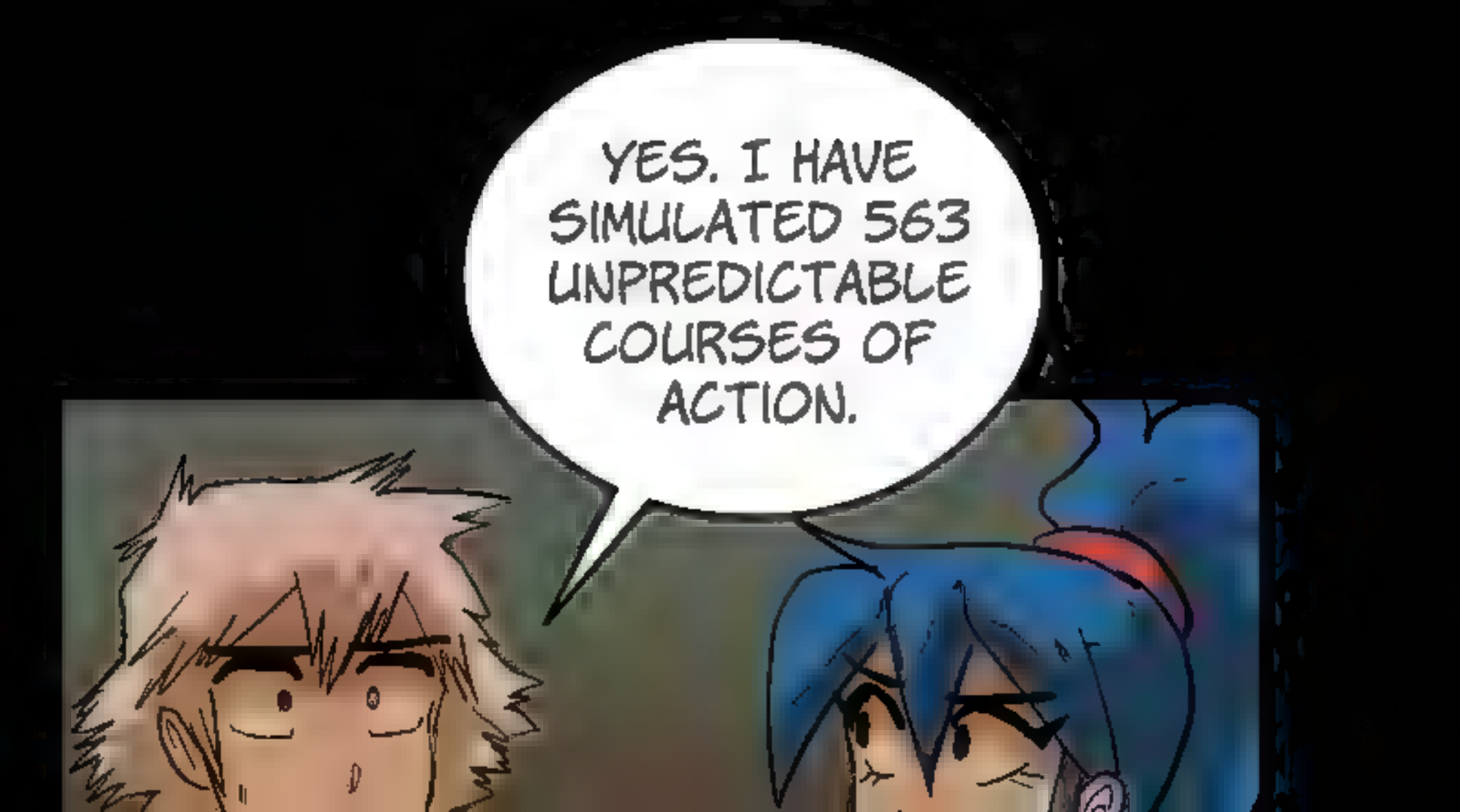
IF DON
IS THE MASTER
OF DECEPTION THAT
EVERYONE SAYS
HE IS...

TO MAKE A MISTAKE AS GLARINGLY OBVIOUS AS REPLACING A BROKEN SWORD WITH A WHOLE ONE...

MAYBE HE *WANTED* YOU TO NOTICE.

IF THAT'S TRUE, WE MUST MAKE CERTAIN THAT OUR NEXT ACTIONS ARE NOT TOO PREDICTABLE.

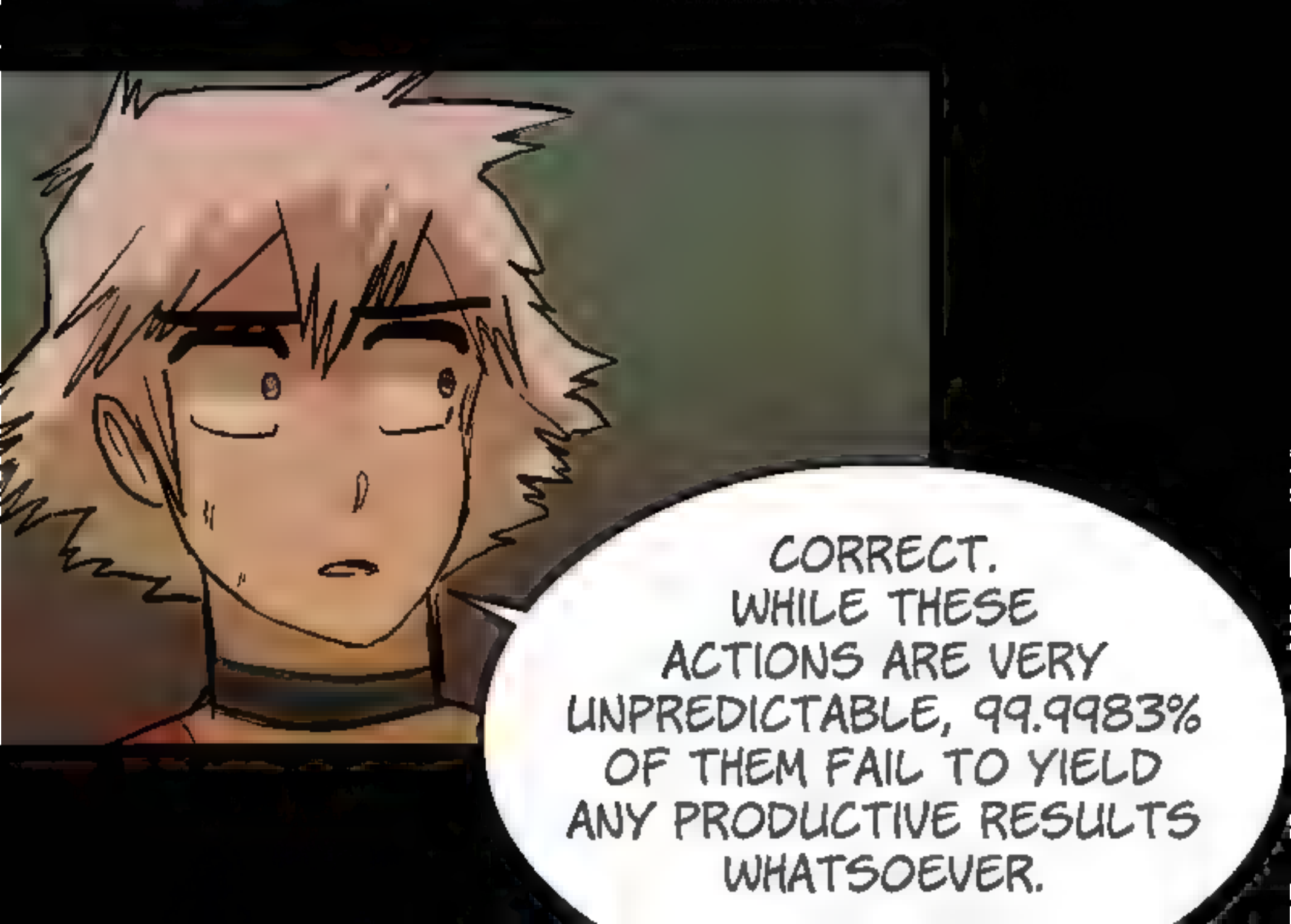

KNOX,
COULD YOU
HELP US ANALYZE
SOME SCENARIOS?


YES. I HAVE SIMULATED 563 UNPREDICTABLE COURSES OF ACTION.

NUMBER 1:
ABANDON OUR COMRADES AND REMAIN HERE, DOING NOTHING.

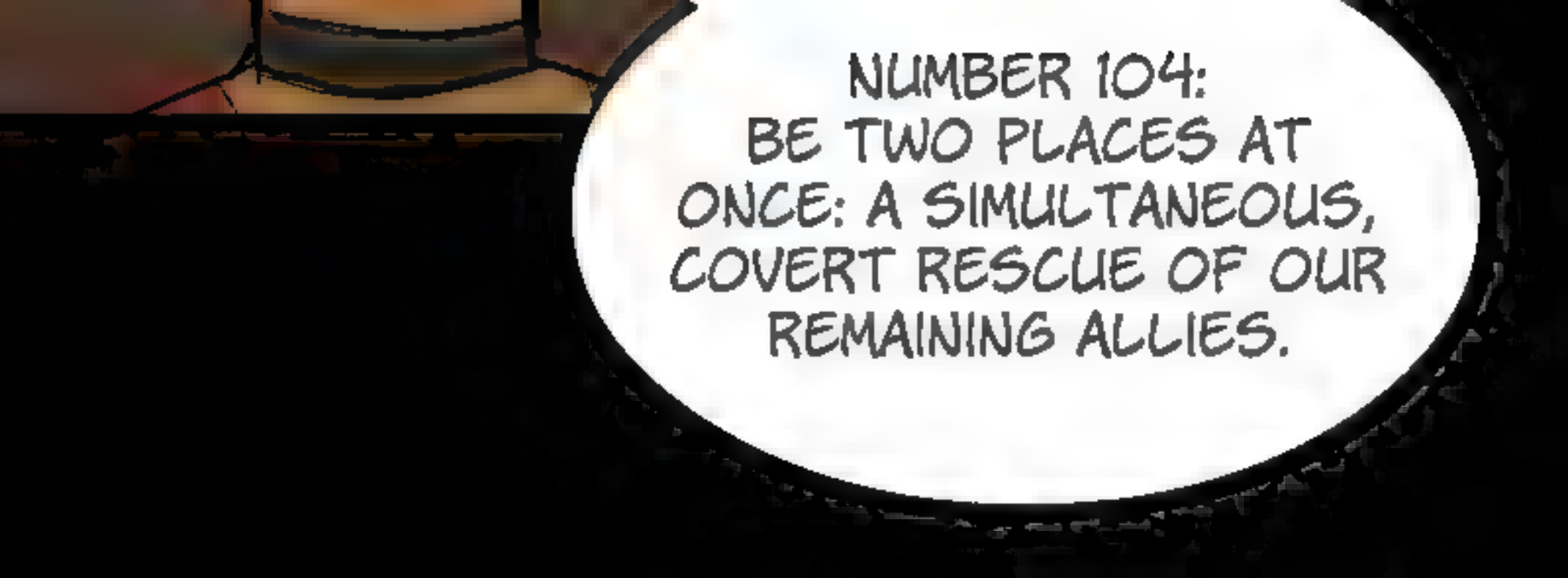
NUMBER 2: SURRENDER THE SWORDS TO DON.
NUMBER 3: INVITE DON TO A TEA PARTY—

KNOX, LITERALLY NONE OF THESE ARE HELPFUL.


CORRECT.
WHILE THESE
ACTIONS ARE VERY
UNPREDICTABLE, 99.9983%
OF THEM FAIL TO YIELD
ANY PRODUCTIVE RESULTS
WHATSOEVER.

COME ON, MAN, GIVE US THE FILTERED VERSION!

AS YOU WISH.


NUMBER 104:
BE TWO PLACES AT ONCE: A SIMULTANEOUS, COVERT RESCUE OF OUR REMAINING ALLIES.

YOU'RE SAYING WE SHOULD SPLIT UP? THAT'S YOUR UNPREDICTABLE SUGGESTION?

HAVEN'T YOU EVER SEEN A MOVIE?
NO.

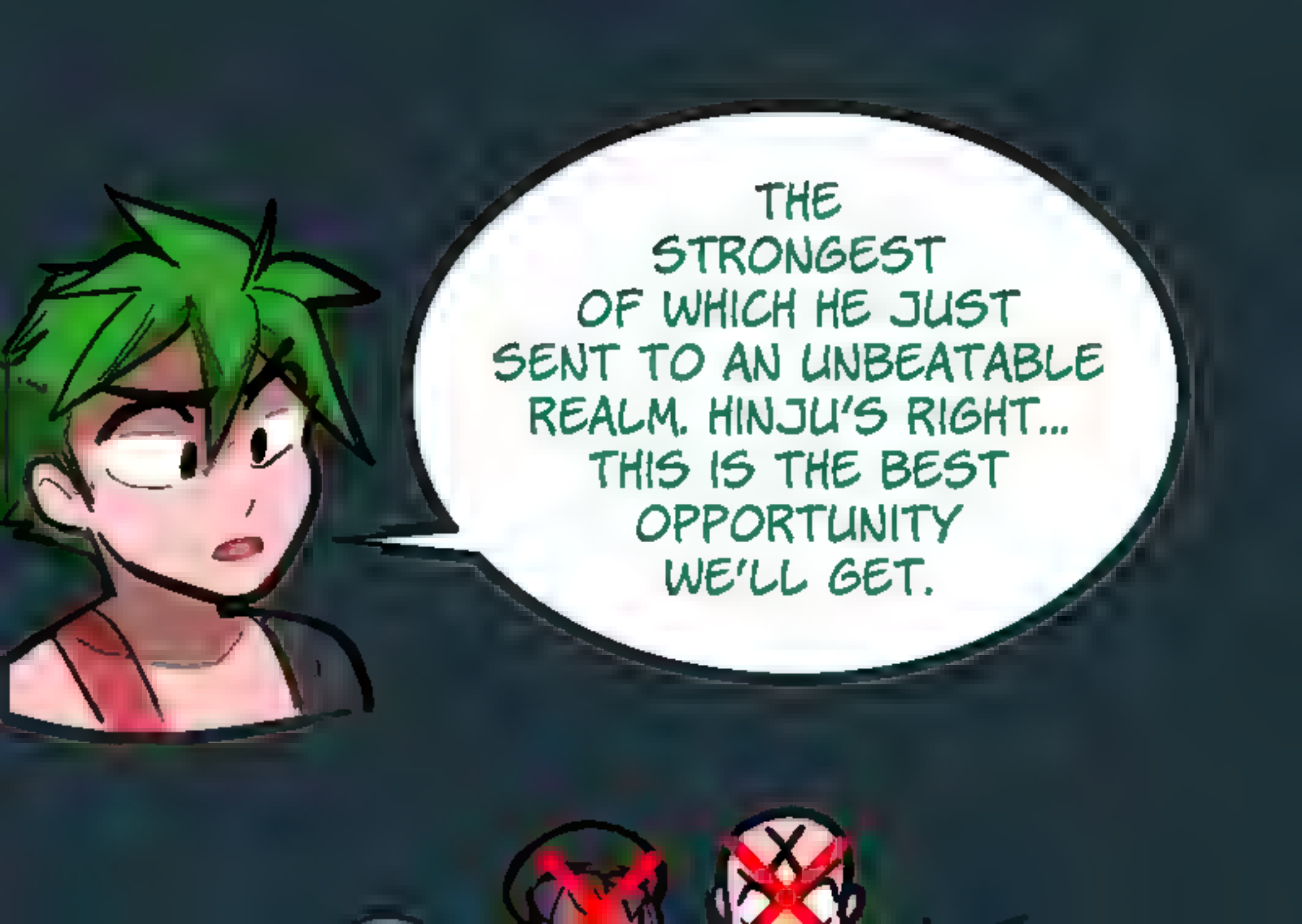
IT MAY NOT BE A BAD PLAN...

AS SOMEONE WHOSE PRIMARY ABILITY WAS SPLITTING UP, I CAN SAFELY SAY THAT IT DOES HAVE ITS ADVANTAGES.

DON MIGHT BE EXPECTING US TO STICK TOGETHER, SO SPLITTING UP WOULD GIVE US THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.

BUT EVEN IF HE'S PREPARED FOR THE POSSIBILITY, IT'S STILL HARDER TO DEAL WITH MULTIPLE PARTIES IN DIFFERENT PLACES. HE MAY BE POWERFUL, BUT HE'S STILL ONLY ONE MAN.

ONE MAN
WITH MANY ALLIES
IN THE ROOM OF
SWORDS...


THE STRONGEST OF WHICH HE JUST SENT TO AN UNBEATABLE REALM. HINJU'S RIGHT... THIS IS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY WE'LL GET.

IT'S EXACTLY AS GYRUS HAD HOPED WHEN WE RIGGED THE DIFFICULTY RATINGS.

THEY WOULDN'T HAVE DARED SEND ANYONE BUT THE BEST TO BEAT *THESE* REALMS!
MAYBE DON HAS REALIZED NOW THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG AND HAS BECOME DESPERATE. THAT COULD EXPLAIN A SLOPPY MISTAKE.

BUT WE CAN'T COUNT ON IT. AND WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WAIT ANY LONGER.

LET'S
GO GET OUR
FRIENDS.

KNOX,
YOU TAKE MARIA
AND HINJU TO
VELA'S REALM.

THEN YOU CAN DROP ME, KODYA AND TORI OFF TO COLLECT BRONZO.

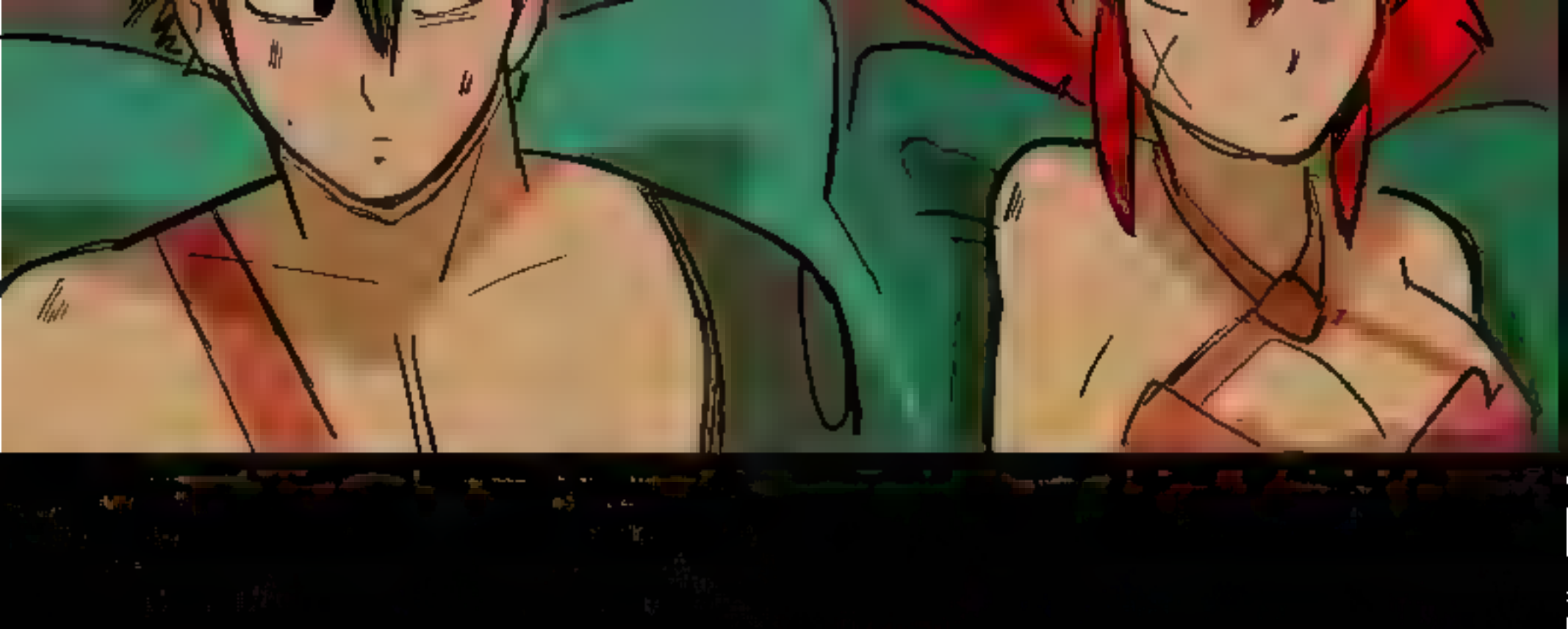
WE'LL MAKE SURE THE SHIP HAS A CHARGE SO KNOX CAN STAY ABOARD AND PICK UP WHICHEVER PARTY IS READY FIRST.

REMEMBER,
TWO YEARS AGO,
GYRUS DID EVERYTHING
HE COULD TO PREPARE
US FOR THIS.

AND HE SPECIFICALLY CHOSE THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM BECAUSE HE KNEW WHAT WE WERE CAPABLE OF.

...

WHATEVER DIFFERENCES WE MAY HAVE, WE MUST PUT BEHIND US AND WORK TOGETHER.



LET'S
NOT LET HIM
DOWN.

ROOM of
SWORDS

UPDATES EVERY MONDAY

COLOR ASSISTANT: @ONEBAROFSOAP

HARK!
IF YE WOULDST
BESTOW THE HONOUR
OF A FAVOURABLE ★RATING

UPON US, WE SHALL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL!